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THE HIGHWAY OF SALVATION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HEAVENLY LOVE AND EARTHLY ECHOES."



THE

HIGHWAY OF SALVATION.

BY

H. K. WOOD,

("A GLASGOW MERCHANT")

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PREFACE.

"MORE light! Oh, for more light!" It was the cry of an aged matron who had long been, externally at least, a consistent follower of the Lamb of God. Overburdened by bodily disease which speedily brought her to the dust of death, and harassed by the remembrance of sins, both of omission and commission, her spirit was enveloped in a cloud of darkness. She had no need to utter the first prayer, which was once taught to a Highland kitchen-maid, "Lord, show me myself." Poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, she felt herself to be; and her urgent and often repeated supplication for more light was practically the same as the second prayer which the Highland girl learned, to her ultimate joy, to offer, "Lord, show me Thyself."

A Christian friend was sent for, and speedily visited

the disconsolate invalid. Discovering her need, he sought to turn her eyes away from self to Jesus, and the Father whom He reveals. As the visitor spoke of the love of Jehovah, manifested in the sending of His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him,—of the love of the Eternal Son, shown by assuming our nature, and therein giving Himself as a ransom for sinners,—of the blood shed on Calvary which cleanseth from all sin,—of the call of the Redeemer to come to Himself that we may find rest,—and of the assurance that whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out,—light from heaven shone again into the old matron's heart. "That's a great comfort," was ever and anon her utterance, as her friend stood beside her bed, and tried to exhibit the Highway of Salvation, free to her and to all. She began anew to encourage herself in the God of all grace, and rejoiced to the end in the faithful saying, that the Son of Man came into the world to seek and to save the lost.

Not from within, but from without, not from self but from Christ, can blessed hope come to any heart. As we look to Him we find light and peace and joy. Love Divine, beaming with unspeakable holiness and beauty from the face of the Crucified, awakens love in our cold, dead natures, and changes us as we gaze

thereon into the likeness of Itself. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

To exhibit, and explain in simple language, the truth as to the way of Salvation, with its results in the case of believers, is the author's object in the following pages. Every chapter, while opening up its own particular theme, is practically an exposition, more or less full, of the main topic of the volume,—and a large amount of original and selected anecdotes has been employed for the illustration and enforcement of the subject.

May the Ever-Blessed Spirit take of the things of Christ which are presented here, and thereby enlighten many darkened understandings, so that they may know the hope of Christ's calling. And if this prayer is answered, the writer is assured that "at evening time it shall be light" to all who welcome the comforting tidings. As Jasper Bolton, when very near the close of life, said to a friend who asked him, "Is your faith strong?" they will each be at least enabled to reply, "No; but *my Jesus is:* I rejoice in Him greatly with a quiet joy."

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CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

THE

HIGHWAY OF SALVATION.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

MANY years ago there lived a poor idiot in one of the southern counties of England. At the church of his native village he was a most regular attender, but as his bodily appearance was distressingly repulsive, some of the neighbours desired that he should be forbidden to enter the house of public prayer. The clergyman was, however, unwilling to grant their request, and next Lord's day gave out as his text, Isaiah xxxv. 8: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

No sooner had the minister read these words as the subject of his discourse, than, altogether regardless of

the surrounding audience, the poor idiot sprang to his feet, and clapping his hands for joy, exclaimed, "Then *I* shall be saved! Then *I* shall be saved!"

The "highway" and the "way" refer to one and the same road. According to the original language, the comparison is suggested between a faint and easily obliterated track through a sandy desert, and the highway of which the prophet speaks—a well-marked, direct, and open causeway, prepared with much expense and labour. The spiritual meaning is well explained by Gill in the words, "A way cast up by sovereign grace, which is raised above the mire and dirt of sin, and carries over it and from it."

Christ Himself is the way, as He declared to the inquiring Thomas: "I am the way . . . No man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John xiv. 6.) He is, indeed, the Father's way to us, as well as our way to the Father.

The way is holy. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." (Rom. iii. 23; Gal. iii. 10.) But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (Gal. iii. 13; 1 Peter iii. 18.) Through the obedience of the Lord Jesus unto death, even the death of the cross, divine justice is for ever satisfied

for all who accept Him as their Saviour. By Christ's doing and dying for sinners, the guiltiest may be saved, while the righteousness and truth of Jehovah are eternally glorified.

The highway was infinitely costly. Who shall measure the humiliation of the step from the throne of glory to the manger, the cross, and the tomb? Who shall ever be able to estimate what it cost the pure and spotless Redeemer to dwell amidst sinners for more than thirty years, and to drink at length the cup of wrath, which, because of the Father's love for human transgressors, He put into the hands of His only begotten and well-beloved Son? It was the Holy One and the Just who "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." It was the Prince of Life who was slain for us—God in human form who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The highway is open. No turnpike bars the traveller's advance. No tolls are levied upon it, but *free to all* of every kindred and nation is the road to the Father's heart and home. "By this new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated (or new made) for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having Christ himself as the high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith." (Hebrews x. 20—22.)

"*The unclean shall not pass over it.*" All honest travellers on this highway are already counted

righteous, because they have put on the righteousness of Christ wherein to stand before the Lord. "Accepted in the Beloved," they are withal fleeing from sin as the abominable thing which God hates, and are labouring and praying continually for the holiness without which no man shall enter Heaven.

"*It shall be for those.*" Some say that this clause refers to the persons previously named in the chapter —the weak, the deaf and dumb, the blind and lame, whom God will heal and save. There is, however, another rendering: "*He*" (*that is, God*) "*shall be with them walking in the way.*" And if Jehovah-Jesus is their guide, "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The way is very plain and straight to all who are humbly willing to follow the directions of Heaven. "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.)

A poor wayfaring man belonging to the coast of Malabar had become deeply convinced of sin. He applied to certain priests for advice, and was directed to drive many blunted nails through his sandals, and on these instruments of torture to make an extended pilgrimage. His sufferings on the road, as well as the loss of blood, would, they said, atone for his guilt, and bring peace to his heart. He had accomplished many miles of his painful journey, when he was compelled

to lie down and rest awhile under a wide spreading tree. While there, some missionaries appeared, and gathering a little audience, began to preach from the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The suffering traveller listened with very peculiar interest to the sermon. It was exactly what he required. Casting off his torturing sandals, he cried aloud, "That is what I want;" and from that day he gave good evidence to all that he had entered on the highway of God's salvation.

That the free mercy of God in Christ is so simple and so cheering that even natural born fools may comprehend and rejoice in it, is illustrated by the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter. Let me present two additional instances of similar results :—

A child of Scottish parentage was discovered, as he grew up, to be almost totally devoid of understanding. His loving and godly father and mother endeavoured in every possible way to awaken intelligence; but to their great grief, he responded to their anxious efforts with only the idiot's vacant stare. Now and again, however, the boy seemed to feel how sad his parents were because they could teach him nothing, and then with a smile he would say, "I'll sing you a song yet before I die." Where or how he had picked up this phrase they could not divine, but it really enwrapped a prediction of which the fulfilment was at length vouchsafed.

In spite of their want of success, the parents continued to pray for the boy, and to bring before him the grand truth of the Gospel that "God hath commended his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Years passed away, and the lad fell into declining health. It seemed plain that he was destined soon to leave this world, and father and mother redoubled their efforts to throw some spiritual light into the darkened chamber of their child's understanding. Their pains and prayers were not in vain. The message of love divine awakened in the end a fitting response. It was as the parents watched by his dying bed that the boy's eyes suddenly beamed with intelligence, and his face was lighted up with joy. He sat up, and exclaimed—

> "Glorious! grand! what do I see?
> Three in One, and One in Three,
> And the middle One, He died for me."

It was the last effort of expiring nature. The lad sank back upon his pillow, and breathed no more.

Where no other truth could find a lodgment, the truth as it is in Jesus made its way, and was gladly welcomed. The boy's utterance recalls to mind the saying of Paul in regard to his own experience: "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and *gave himself for me.*"

By the early death of his poor parents, another idiot boy was left utterly unprovided for, in a village in the upper parts of Ayrshire. The parochial authorities boarded the orphan with a decent old widow, under whose care he grew up almost into young manhood—well, so far as the body was concerned, but with only an occasional and fitful gleam of intelligence to indicate the existence of mind. Though he could apparently be taught nothing, the lad would not remain away from church upon any consideration; but little was it suspected that even with him the entrance of God's word could give light.

Sickness, apparently unto death, confined the youth to his humble bed for several Sabbaths. One of the office bearers of the congregation, learning the cause of absence, visited him, and endeavoured to teach him something about the way of salvation, but could not get a word of sense from the patient, or convey to him a single idea. The clergyman was appealed to, and went to visit the lad. Drawing a stool quietly to the bedside, the minister spoke kindly to the sufferer, and after a little asked him if he knew he had a soul. "O, no, sir, I have no soul," was the answer, given with a shake of the boy's head. "Yes, my lad," continued the minister, "you have a soul—a soul that will be joyful with the Saviour for ever in our heavenly Father's happy home, or be cast down into the pit of woe with the devil and his angels."

As the minister spoke, the vacant stare gave place to a look indicating comprehension. A smile passed over the poor youth's face, and he responded thus: "I once had a soul, sir, but I have no soul now, for I gave it away to Christ to keep, one day, at the back of the tree down in the meadow. Ever since that, I have had no soul of my own." Doubtless the All-gracious Friend of the needy took charge of the precious deposit, and the lad was at rest in the knowledge of the Redeemer's promise to preserve all who cast their care on Him. Was not his utterance an echo of the words addressed to the Corinthians: "*Ye are not your own*, for ye are bought with a price"? and a copying of the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles as depicted in his language to Timothy: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that *he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day*"?

To an averment of the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, a great scholar once objected in most imperative terms:—"I have read the Bible over and over in the original languages; I have studied it day and night; I have written criticisms and comments upon it, and it is a very extraordinary thing that I should not be able to discover that meaning in the Scriptures, which is said to be so plain, that a *wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err in discovering it!*"

"Yes," replied Cecil, to whom this statement had been reported, "*it is extraordinary*, till we open this Bible, and there we see the fact explained. The man, who approaches the Word of God in his own wisdom, shall not find what the fool shall discover under the teaching of Divine wisdom; for it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent;' and 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.'" (1 Cor. i.)

The celebrated Countess of Huntingdon used to thank God for the letter "M" in 1 Cor. i. 26. There it is stated that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." If the verse had said that not *any* such were called, her hope had perished; but she was indeed one of the "not many noble" who, having learned the truth at the feet of Jesus, could sing with Paul, "We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.)

No one who confesses his ignorance, and gives himself up continually to Christ to be guided by the Divine Word and Spirit, need be afraid of missing, or straying from the highway of salvation. For him the faithful promise has been recorded:—"The meek will he guide in judgment, and *the meek will he teach his way.*" (Psalm xxv. 9.) Without doubt, *the gate is straight, and the way narrow*; but it is only man's

pride and love of sin that make them so. The door is *wide open* for our return, and the way will be found *delightfully pleasant* by all who turn their backs on the paths in which destroyers go, and run into the outstretched arms of our Father's everlasting love.

The roads leading to perdition are numberless, but there is only *One Highway of Salvation.* (Acts iv. 12.) We enter on it, and walk in it by receiving and resting on Christ alone for deliverance from wrath and sin, as He is offered to us in the testimony of God.

CHAPTER II.

The Lily of Testimony.

CHAPTER II.

THE LILY OF TESTIMONY.

IT was a cloudy and dark day in David's experience. His enemies—the foes of God's chosen people—were harassing his kingdom; and there seemed to be a frown on the face of the Almighty Himself. With much thus discouraging and depressing him, where did he seek and find comfort? Only in the promise of Him who is called Faithful and True. To Israel there had been given assurances of permanent settlement in the land of Canaan, in its fullest extent, and of victory over all surrounding nations who should wickedly disturb them in its possession. To David himself it had been promised that his rule should be established over all the tribes, and his son succeed him in the dominion. Therefore did the son of Jesse encourage himself in God in the midst of calamity and trouble. Vain was the help of man; but with the Lord on the side of Israel and Israel's king, success must at length crown their efforts. Grasping in his time of need all the promises suited to his case,

his faith burst out in the triumphant words of the sixtieth Psalm: "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice. I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe."

According to the title of the psalm, we believe the king directed this exultant melody to be taught to his people. Probably his soldiers went to the attack of the strong city of Edom singing the bold confiding words. The result was a great defeat of the descendants of Esau. "Throughout all Edom," as we are informed in 2 Sam. viii., "put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants." Faith won the day, because it glorified Him who invited its exercise. Had Jehovah not promised, where had faith found firm footing? But with the sure word of Him who is the Rock of Ages beneath its feet, was there not reason for its resolute and buoyant tread? "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

The title of this psalm also tells us that it was addressed to the chief musician, no doubt as a sacred song to be used in the temple-worship. It is called *Michtam*, which some critics say means *a mystery*, others *a golden psalm*. We are for the present, however, most concerned about its particular theme or subject, which is declared to be *Shushan-eduth*, or

the Lily of Testimony. As to the writer's meaning in this epithet, we may perhaps get a hint in the seventy-eighth Psalm. It is there said that the Lord "established a testimony in Judah, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children . . . *that they might set their hope in God.*" The *Testimony* I take then to be, in special, the record of those gracious promises which were uttered for the begetting and strengthening of faith; and in this aspect there is a peculiar force and beauty in designating it *the Lily*. More lovely and more fragrant indeed to the spiritual senses than the lily to the natural, is God's testimony of grace and goodness to sinners. Full oft had David found it so, as well as when he penned the sixtieth Psalm. Condescending too, like the lily of the valley, to the very lowliest, is the mercy which bringeth forgiveness. Mungo Park was once greatly comforted by a tiny tuft of moss on which his eye fell, when weary, worn, and sad, in the African desert; but very life from the dead is the sight and sweet scent of the lily of God's testimony, when its beauty and its savour greet the spirit of a man despairing because of his sin and utter unworthiness.

The case of Colonel Gardiner, who died little more than a century ago, affords us an apt illustration. He was awakened in the midst of a wicked life by an extraordinary dream. He thought he beheld Christ on

the cross dying in agony; and as he gazed on the amazing spectacle, a voice seemed to sound in his ear the words, "O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these thy returns?" With conscience thus aroused, terrible convictions filled him with fear. "He was ready," under his anguish of mind, it is said, "to drop down in unutterable astonishment and agony of heart, appearing to himself the vilest monster in the creation of God, who had all his lifetime been crucifying Christ afresh by his sins." For months he walked in darkness and dread; but at length the day of salvation dawned in his heart. Hope awoke within him through the words of the Most High: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26). From the hour when he realized their blessed import, his anxiety fled. The love that passeth knowledge constrained him to a life of loving devotion to his Father in Jesus. God had spoken in His holiness; and in God's promise Colonel Gardiner rejoiced.

Frequently does the Word of the Lord reveal the disease and the cure almost simultaneously; and the soul, grasping the truth, beholds its own lost condition, and the glorious freeness of the salvation of

Christ, with scarce an interval between. God speaks in His holiness, and shows the heart itself and its Saviour; and at once it takes up the song of rejoicing.

On one occasion many people were observed crowding towards the door of a church in a little town in Scotland. A woman of the town, notorious for all manner of wickedness, learning that a clergyman from England was to preach, turned her steps towards the house of prayer. The officiating minister was the celebrated Andrew Fuller. As he read out his text, the woman's attention was arrested. It was in Isaiah xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." "Surely, then," thought she, "there must be hope even for me! Wretch that I am, I am not beyond the ends of the earth." Every word she drank in eagerly, while the preacher unfolded the way of salvation. God's call and God's promise awakened hope within her; and trusting in the Saviour with all her heart, she learned from that hour to live to Him who died to save her.

As quickly as in this woman's soul, did faith and hope spring to life in the case of a wicked young soldier. The tears and holy example of his widowed mother, and the warnings and teachings of his minister, had been all in vain. For a considerable period he had lived a dissolute life, and at length enlisted. His regiment was sent to a foreign land.

After he had been some years there, spending himself in the service of Satan, he received a present from his mother. She had sent it, when on her dying bed, by a godly man who was going to the place where her son's regiment was stationed. It was a little pocket Bible, and the verbal request—the last she would ever make—accompanied it, that he would for her sake read one verse, at least, every day. "Well, that is not much," said the wild youth; "so here goes." He opened at the close of the eleventh of Matthew, and his eye fell on the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Well," said he, "this is very odd. I have opened at the only verse in the Bible that I could ever learn by heart when I was in the Sabbath school; I never could, for the life of me, commit another. It is very strange! But who is this '*Me*' that is mentioned in the verse?"

The friend that brought the Bible and the message from his mother, told the young man all about the God-man Redeemer; how He left the Father's bosom that He might die to save us; how He is now at the right hand of God, the Lamb as it had been slain; how He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to Him, and to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. The heart of the young man was touched. He yielded at once to the

invitation of Jesus, when he understood who called him, and his walk and conversation were thenceforth such as became the Gospel. Rejoicing in the same sweet invitation and promise, he met his death on the field of battle. When those intrusted with the burial of the dead found him, his head was pillowed on his Bible lying open at the words, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

There is no preparation of any kind required by any sinner before coming to the Saviour, and hoping in Him. God's testimony that He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, and His invitation to *whosoever will*, are surely a sufficient warrant. Many, however, are like the Jews, who, when directed by our Lord to believe on Him whom the Father had sent to save, said, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?" I have known some who expected to behold a vision of Christ on the cross in order to discover that the Lord was willing to receive and forgive them; and others have told me that their ground of confidence that they had been truly converted was, that, after days of darkness, they somehow felt suddenly lighter and happier while attending a prayer-meeting, or singing God's praise, though they could not condescend on a single Bible truth as the occasion of their comfort. Peace thus obtained is baseless, and soon vanishes. Even though we had

signs from heaven, as real and magnificent as the transfiguration of the Saviour on the mount, they would not be at all comparable, as grounds of faith, to the "more sure word of prophecy," which the Bible affords. The effect of visions, or other manifestations from the spirit world, is often but transitory. We are apt to question afterwards what was said or what was meant, or even to doubt as to the reality of what we supposed we saw or heard; but God's testimony commending His love to us in Christ, we can recur to at all times. The promise, on which the Holy Spirit caused us to hope last week, or last year, we can read again to-day. It is fresh and bright and fragrant as a full-blown lily. Whether for the begetting of faith, or its renewal when in decadence, there is nothing like a consideration of the Divine letter, revealing and repeating in so many touching forms the love of our Father in Heaven, and pressing upon us so anxiously the acceptance of the unspeakable gift.

A young woman said once to her minister when on her dying bed: "I have little to relate as to my experience. I have been much tried and tempted; but this has been my sheet-anchor,—*He has said,* 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' I know I come to Him, and I expect He will be as good as His word. Poor and unworthy as I am, He will not trifle with me; it would be as much beneath His greatness as His goodness."

Is there one reader of these pages who knows not yet what it is to have peace of conscience and joy in God? Let him try this young woman's way of resting simply on the testimony of the Almighty, and expecting therefore salvation from Jesus. It is the royal, the only road to ease of heart. "We which have believed do enter into rest."

Many real Christians give themselves much unhappiness by partially forgetting or shifting the ground of their confidence. They slide into the habit of looking to their frames and feelings, and through them to Christ. They become thus "like one who sees the sun on" rippling "water." The light "quivers and moves as the water moves; but he that looks upon Jesus in the mirror of the Word by faith, sees Him ever the same. Whether we have sensible comfort or not, our faith should be fixed nakedly on nothing but the Word of the living God," and on the Saviour of whom it tells. Not our feelings, not our doings, but free grace, reigning through righteousness and testified in the Gospel, is the ground of confidence and the source of consolation. "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

To the Rev. John Brown of Haddington a clergyman once put a question, as to the best method to obtain relief when like to be overwhelmed in the pulpit with a sense of his great sinfulness. Mr. Brown gave a memorable reply. "Attempt then,"

said he, "to believe—just as a sinner—as the chief of sinners. *Those promises have been sweetest to me which extend to men if they are but out of hell.* 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Once these words were sweet to my soul. I thought, bad as I was, I could not be worse than the chief of sinners. Conscience said that I was the most wicked wretch that ever breathed, and that I had shown myself to be such, especially by rebelling against convictions, and by trampling on Christ's alluring words; yet, since Christ came to save sinners, even the chief, why, thought I, should I except myself?"

In the fight against sin, nothing nerves the soul for doing stern battle like the presence of the Lily of Testimony,—a right understanding and simple acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus. That word, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins:" or that other, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace," will help us marvellously, when recalled to our remembrance in time of need. Luther tells of a German divine who acknowledged that he never could overcome a special heart-sin, though he had resolved a hundred times against it, till he came to understand the free grace of Christ. He had trusted to his own resolutions, but his strength

was as tow before a flame. When, however, by faith he grasped his Saviour in the promises of the Gospel, he obtained the victory. Whoever wishes, then, to overcome sin and Satan, let him display the banner which is offered to his hand, and which exhibits, in golden letters on an azure ground, the words, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice." Marching underneath that flag of salvation, his foes will flee before him.

When beset with the heaviest cares of earth, it is the same blessed word—the Lily of Testimony—that cheers and sustains the believer's heart. What depths of comfort in the declaration, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things"! and in the assurance, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Paul Gerhardt, the admirable German hymn-writer, was once driven from his parish and home by the Elector of Brandenburg, because he preached the doctrine of free grace. With his weeping wife and children he went forth, not knowing whither he went. In his wanderings he came to a little country inn. Leaving his family there, he sought the recesses of a dark wood at a little distance, that he might bethink himself and pray. Engaged thus, the familiar text flashed into his mind, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." His distress was gone at once. God had spoken in His holiness; and His trusting child was rejoicing.

But a few hours had he to wait with glad expectancy for the coming deliverance. The Lord sent another German prince to offer him a better place than he had lost, with full liberty to proclaim the good tidings of great joy.

All the promises of God are absolutely sure and certain in Christ Jesus, who is freely offered to all in the Gospel. Embracing Christ in the promises, or the promises in Christ, we hold the Almighty by an indissoluble bond. The two immutable things, *God's oath* confirming *God's promise*, are pledged to us; and if God has thus spoken, should not believers rejoice? How confidently men can rely on the word of each other! If a man, somewhat proved to be upright, has made a solemn promise to us, we cling to it, hoping often against hope. Though he and we should be separated far as the poles asunder, if we know he is in life, we keep expecting the performance of his engagement. And if sinful, dying worms can be thus trusted, oh, how much more should we firmly embrace, and hopefully expect the fulfilment of, the promises of God's loving-kindness!

> "He has power, and can fulfil;
> He is truth, and therefore will."

Grandly did the old Scottish believer, of whom Dr. Brown tells us in his *Horæ Subsecivæ*, respond to the challenge of her pastor, regarding the ground of her

confidence. "Janet," said the minister, "what would you say if, after all He has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?" "E'en's [even as] He likes," answered Janet: "if He does, He'll lose mair than I'll do."

At first sight Janet's reply looks irreverent, if not something worse. As we contemplate it, however, its sublimity bursts and grows upon us. Like the Psalmist, she could say, "I on thy word rely" (Ps. cxix. 114, *metrical version*). If *His* word were broken, if *His* faithfulness should fail, if *that* foundation could be destroyed, truly He would lose more than His trusting child. But that could never be. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations." Well, then, might Janet encourage herself in the Lord her God, and say, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice."

On my dying pillow, I crave for no other spiritual refreshment than this, the Lily of Testimony. While I live, I would like to fix it on my breast, as the livery of my Divine Master, and the minister of consolation and strength. As I inhale its sweet fragrance, my soul shall joy in God. In life and in death, I would cleave unto it, as the revealer of Him who is all my salvation, and all my desire.

"He that hath received his [Christ's] testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." On the other hand, "He that believeth not God hath made him a

liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life ; and this life is in his Son."

Will the reader say, at the bar of his own conscience, and as in the presence of the Judge of all, whether he is, or is not, making God a liar? If he has not yet taken God at His word, and accepted the gift of eternal life in Jesus, may he do so now ; and henceforth he will be able rightly to sing with David, "God hath spoken in his holiness ; I will rejoice."

CHAPTER III.

Perfect Love Casting out Fear.

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PERFECT LOVE CASTING OUT FEAR.

ONE of the greatest hindrances to the exercise of faith is the spirit of legalism which is natural to fallen man. It looks at God only through the law. When the soul, feeling its guilt, dreads the punishment which the law threatens, then the legal spirit cries, "What must I DO to be saved?" And when the consideration is how heaven is to be attained, the same spirit asks, "What shall I DO to inherit eternal life?"

This legality in the heart is the offspring of ignorance and self-conceit. It does not know God, and therefore it distrusts Him. It has never realized its own utter inability to accomplish anything absolutely good, and therefore it fancies it can work so as to satisfy the demands of the divine law.

What, then, is the true revelation which Jehovah has made of Himself? How does He draw near the sinner, so as to beget confidence towards God in

the self-condemned soul? A simple anecdote may perhaps assist some anxious heart to a clear understanding of the state of the case:—

Nearly forty years ago, a pious young clergyman of Hamburg felt his bosom yearning with desire to rescue from ruin some of the wild young blackguards of that city. He and a few like-minded friends waited upon God in prayer continually till He sent the means to open a little Reformatory. Thither Wichern, the young minister, removed his mother, and took up house with a dozen of rough, hardened lads, born and bred in crime. "He shut himself up with them," says the Rev. W. F. Stevenson, "in the hope of winning hold upon their wild natures. They were mostly hopeless incorrigibles, given up by everybody who had tried a hand upon them. What will he do with these vicious, hardened beings? How shall they be won from the old ways, and become gentle, teachable, sober, busy, honest? Only by loving them. One special difficulty was their distrust. When Wichern kindly reached out his hand to welcome a lad one day, he drew his quickly back lest he should be struck. Kindness seemed to them only a cunning disguise, under which some mysterious project for their hurt lay hidden. They watched every act with a suspicion that was quickened by all they had hitherto known of life. How was this distrust overcome? Wichern assured them of an

entire forgiving and forgetting of the past; that there was to be no punishment for anything they had ever done; and that his mother was to be their mother, his home their home. They heard and gazed in amazement. But as time wore on, and they found it was true, their whole heart warmed to their new life. Love was the atmosphere of the house; and the harshness of their own experiences gradually gave way to it, until the same spirit was wakened among themselves."

This earthly thing is a picture of God's method of driving out terror and distrust from our natures. "Behold," said the angelic messenger, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, *as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness

of God in him." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *

Jehovah is thus love itself: and yet He is ever just, even while the justifier of the greatest sinner that believes in Jesus. It is only our ignorance of His holy love, and of the Saviour freely offered in the Gospel to whosoever will, which leads us to dread Him with the terror of the slave. In his *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, Mr. Fleming mentions the case of a most hardened criminal that was sentenced to be executed in the town of Ayr. The Lord convinced him of his sin, and thereafter so revealed His Divine mercy, as exhibited in the crucified Redeemer, that on his way to the scaffold the man could not help crying out, "Oh, He is a great forgiver! *He is a great forgiver!*" And then he added, "Now hath perfect love cast out fear. I know God hath nothing to say against me, for Jesus Christ hath paid all; and those are free whom the Son makes free."

Do we desire to be made partakers of the same happy confidence? Let us go often to Bethlehem, and gaze on the Infant of days laid in the manger; to Gethsemane, and contemplate the God-man sweating great drops of blood; to Calvary, and stand in awe at our incarnate Creator dying that He might atone for our guilt: and surely we shall grow into the

* See Luke ii., 10-11; 1 John iv., 9-10; 2 Cor. v., 19-21; Acts xvi., 31.

knowledge of the character of our God and Father, and find His perfect love casting out all our slavish fear. And yet we shall grow in another kind of fear—the fear of offending Him whose love makes our hearts bound with gladness. We shall hate and dread sin with an ever-deepening intensity, even when our joyous voices swell the chorus—"O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Is there one reader who has not yet believed the love that God hath to us? You must, dear friend, be very unhappy when you think of Him who cannot pass by transgression, and of the day of death and judgment. True it is that your sin must be punished, either in yourself, or in another capable of becoming your surety and substitute. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." God Himself hath, however, provided a Lamb, His only begotten Son, for a burnt offering. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Receive not then the grace of

God in vain. He makes known to you His compassionate love in Jesus. Do you believe it? Are you willing to accept God's free pardon? Do you close with His offered love in Christ? Then you are forgiven all trespasses. You are accepted in the Beloved. "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"

And now, that we may advance a step in the consideration of our subject, let us rehearse the experience of one who became a great preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus:—"I lay," said Martin Boos, "I lay for years together upon the cold ground, though my bed stood near me; I scourged myself till the blood came, and clothed my body with a hair shirt; I hungered, and gave my bread to the poor; I spent every leisure moment in the precincts of the Church; I confessed and communicated every week." Boos, moreover, gave himself an immense deal of trouble to lead what he thought was a holy life, and by every one who knew him he was accounted a saint. The saint, however, was miserable, and could not but cry dolefully, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Going to see a pious old woman on her death-bed, he said wistfully, "Ah! you may well die in peace!" "Why?" inquired she. "Because you have lived such a godly life," answered Boos. "What a miserable comforter!" said the old woman, smiling; "if Christ had not died for me, I should have perished for ever,

with all my good works and piety. Trusting in Him, I die at peace." These words gave new light to his soul. God's way of peace, through the blood of His Son, was understood and accepted joyfully. Henceforth the joy of the Lord was his strength.

This story brings out both the aspects of legalism,—guilty dread of God, and great efforts to work out a righteousness that will secure His favour. It toils that it may merit love, and knows nothing of free love, already welcomed and enjoyed, as a motive power in the heart. It looks ever at what *it* can do *for* God, not at what *God* does *for* us, and offers *to* us. It clings to its own worthless doings as a covering in God's sight, and rejects the clothing of wrought gold —the perfect obedience of Christ—the only wedding garment which is fit to be seen at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. It can render no loving service, for in its eyes God is only a hard taskmaster. Measuring Him by its own narrow, selfish nature, it cannot comprehend that "they are dearer to God that seek something from Him, than they who strive to bring something to Him." Therefore, it forces itself to yield a wretched, halting, heartless service, with the view of buying blessings from heaven, and refuses the free gift of pardon and peace, love and life, the child's place and the child's new nature in and through Jesus Christ.

Paul describes the error of this spirit of legality, and exhibits the only true ground of hope, when he says, "The Jews being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans x., 3, 4.) In other words, when I take the Lord Jesus as my Redeemer, not only are my sins then forgiven because of His sufferings, but I am at once and for ever accepted by the Father, on account of the perfect obedience which my Saviour rendered on earth to the holy law. He is the Lord *my* Righteousness, provided for me by my Father's love; and hiding in Him, my Father is ever well pleased with me. I require not to serve that I may win the place of a child; but becoming a child at once when I lay hold on Christ as my Saviour, I delight in serving my loving Father. The service cumbers not. It is not a toil for wages or mere reward, but a daily thank-offering from a heart that knows and believes the infinite love that God hath to us.

The prodigal's first thought (Luke xv.) as he ruminated over his contemplated return to his father's house was, in the spirit of legalism, to offer himself as a "hired servant;" but the gushing tenderness of his parent's love at once buried all his distrust, and bound him soul and body to the promotion of his

father's pleasure, by bonds such as no mere worker for wages ever knew.

Even when we have been begotten again to a lively hope, the spirit of legalism requires to be watched and prayed against, like every other lust of the old man. If we have been distinguished in any way by sovereign grace, it will try to exalt us above measure, as if *we were something*, and had some meritorious claim on God; and when such a result as self-glorifying is apprehended by the Great Physician, He may deem it necessary to permit a messenger of Satan to buffet us. *A sinner saved by grace* is the highest style and title of the noblest of God's family on earth. The farthest advanced in the Divine life will be most ready to confess himself with Paul as "the chief of sinners," and to rejoice in the faithful saying that it was *the lost* whom Christ Jesus came to save.

When Dr. Carey, the celebrated Indian missionary, was supposed to be dying, he was asked what should be the text of his funeral sermon. "Oh," said he in reply, "I feel that such a poor sinful creature as I am is unworthy to have anything said about him; but if a funeral sermon should be preached, let it be from the 51st Psalm and the first verse, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.'" When his will was opened, it was found to contain the following instruction to

his executors :—" I direct that my funeral be as plain as possible, and that the following inscription, and nothing more, be put on my gravestone :—

WILLIAM CAREY,

Born Aug. 17, 1761; Died———

'A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall.'"

A labourer in God's vineyard at home, who had been much blessed in his work for Christ, once visited a young lady who was dying under a slow but mortal disease. He spoke to her of having hope of heaven to comfort the heart, when leaving this world behind ; and she replied, "You may well have hope, you who have laboured so much for Jesus." Tears filled the eyes of her visitor. "Alas! alas!" he said, "you are much mistaken. I feel my nature so corrupt that I would not like any creature to see within. Only to my gracious God can I unveil all, that He may send me health and cure. I cannot remember a sinless day, or an untainted action. My best thoughts, and words, and deeds have been defiled. But though I had a righteousness of my own working, had I even the righteousness of the angel Gabriel to deck myself with, I would put all off at once, if I might put on the righteousness of Christ. It possesses infinite merit, as the obedience to the death of the Almighty Lawgiver to His own law. I count all but dung that I

may win Christ, and be found in Him, covered with the robe of His glorious righteousness. He is the Lord *my* righteousness." Ere long the young lady learned for herself that Christ is made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and she died glorying in the Lord.

It is, however, more especially when Christians have been ensnared by some besetting sin that the legal spirit awakes again, and prevents an immediate application to the fountain opened. Its language then is, "I am such a heinous backslider, God cannot love or forgive me." Thus it limits God, dishonours the blood of Christ, and, if indulged, takes away all power from the soul to resist renewed temptation. My friend, if this be your case, let me entreat you to believe God when He says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Insult not the Majesty of heaven by questioning His truth. He means what He says. He delights to multiply pardons. Stay not away then from your God in Christ. He is waiting to be gracious to you. Your only ruin is away from Him. Your only safety is *under His shadow*. Cast yourself on Jesus, and you shall find complete pardon, entire acceptance, and grace all-sufficient to purify and make you a partaker of the Divine nature. All

our well-springs of light, life, and love are in God, and in Him alone. "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. xxii. 17).

A fair young woman, the only child of her widowed mother, had been seduced from her poor but happy home. Her solitary parent, in her lonely cottage, had no resource but in prayer. Some months passed away. At length, abandoned by her deceiver, but hoping still in her mother's love, the poor girl at midnight returned to her old home. Lifting the latch she found the door unbarred, and crept softly to bed at her mother's feet. Awaking soon, the mother discovered that all her prayers had been answered in the return of the penitent wanderer. When asked how she could sleep while her door was unfastened within, she declared that never, by day or night, had it been barred since her daughter went away. She had ever cherished the expectation that her child would be restored, and could not bear the thought of her finding a barred door, come home again when she might.

The door to our Father's home and heart is never barred against the returning prodigal. Nay, He has set before us an *open* door that no man can shut. The door is Christ, the Mediator between God and man, able to lay His hand upon both. "By me," says Christ, "if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Him that cometh to me I will *in no wise* cast out." In despite then of all legal doubts and fears, and whatever be our condition, let us hasten to our Father in Jesus. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The best corrective of legalism is to consider our relation to God in the light which thus beams from the mercy seat; its only perfect cure comes from being rooted and grounded in the love which passeth knowledge. Planted in this rich, revivifying soil, our fruit will assuredly be unto holiness. Our Father in heaven will be glorified, and our own joy will be full.

CHAPTER IV.

Abuse of the Gospel.

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ABUSE OF THE GOSPEL.

A CONSPIRACY had been formed against the authority of their youthful king by a number of the nobles of an eastern monarchy. A courtier high in rank, and on whom his master had showered many favours, was induced to join in the attempt to get quit of their ruler. The rebels were able to bring many troops into the field, and for a while their efforts wore a promising aspect; but gathering an overwhelming force, the monarch unexpectedly fell upon his foes, and at once and completely routed their army, and destroyed their power. Many of the leaders were slain on the field of battle; and the distinguished courtier, who had so ill-requited the kindness of his king, became a destitute outlaw, fleeing for his life—hiding sometimes in the depths of the unbroken forest, or in the rocky caverns of untrodden mountains, but ever suffering bitterly for his crime. His greatest suffering, however, was mental. An evil conscience could not be cast aside like the insignia of his degraded nobility.

His ingratitude grew daily blacker in his eyes, and the remembrance of it stung him ever deeper, as with scorpion sting, till he could endure it no longer.

Some years had by this time passed away. Grief, and want, and hardship had so entirely changed the appearance of the once handsome man that disguise was now hardly needed. He returned, unnoticed because unknown, to the capital of the kingdom, and sought the precincts of the palace which he knew so well. It had been easy to confess his guilt to some official, and find a speedy exit from the misery of existence on earth; but he was constrained to desire to see the king himself. There was the faintest possible chance that the clemency of the royal heart might be extended towards him, the guiltiest of the rebels, because formerly the most favoured of the monarch's friends. At the worst, he could but perish.

The grand difficulty, as he well knew, was to reach the royal presence. The etiquette of the court made access almost impossible to any but the highest nobles. How then could such a poor and wretched creature as he hope to find approach?

Watching one day beyond the outermost sentinels who guarded the palace, he observed a little boy running past the soldiers, and amusing himself with childish glee. The proper guardian of the child did not appear; and as the little one continued sporting about, the outcast smilingly drew nigh, and engaged

in play with him. The old courtier had not forgot his manners. He knew well how to ingratiate himself even with an infant; and as he soon discovered, from his companion's prattle and the features of his countenance, that he was none other than the Prince Royal, no effort was spared to make the boy his friend. A gleam of hope had already entered the outlaw's heart, that through the child he might find access to the father, and perhaps obtain pardoning grace from the sovereign.

The opportunity had been so thoroughly improved that, when the servant approached to recall the child to the palace, he would not return without his new-found friend. Nothing would satisfy him but to be carried in the arms of his elderly playmate, and the servant was obliged to yield to the wish. Each fondling the other, the boy-prince and the rebel passed guard after guard, and at length into the royal presence itself the pair found their way.

The servant had scarcely uttered a hurried explanation of the strange craving of the royal child for the poor man on whose breast he was reposing with delight, till the rebel was on his knees before his offended sovereign and had divulged his name. A dark cloud of righteous wrath, betokening coming vengeance, passed over the countenance of the monarch; but holding up his youthful friend as a mediator, the repentant suppliant confessed all his folly, and

especially the heinous crime he had committed, and entreated mercy for the little Prince's sake. The boy smiled upon the pleader, and sought by fond endearment to soothe the grief which he could not understand, but which was now wringing bitter tears from the man he had learned so quickly to love. Justice called for punishment, and for a time drowned the pleadings of mercy in the bosom of the King. But the father could not resist the plea which the contrite petitioner urged; he could not order to execution the man to whom his darling boy clung with such fond affection. For his son's sake he forgave the rebel. For his son's sake he restored him to his honourable position in the kingdom, and to his place in the inner circle of trusted friends. Nevermore, as we may well believe, did a thought of rebellion rise in the breast of the pardoned noble. Henceforth none so faithful, so zealous, so devoted as he; none so ready to shed his life's blood for his King, and for the Prince, his first-born son, the prevailing mediator, whose friendship had secured, not forgiveness merely, but restoration to dignity and wealth, to royal confidence and regard.

This ancient story is in many points peculiarly illustrative of our condition as sinners—rebels against the King of heaven, and of the only method of approach and reconciliation open to us. It fails, however, to show that it was the pitying love of the

King Himself which provided the mediator, and that it was through inconceivable humiliation, and suffering, and death that the Incarnate Son of God made peace for us, and secured our restoration to Divine favour. To far higher honours, indeed, than any originally conferred on man, are believers exalted through their Redeemer. They become sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' Should they not ever strive to let their devotion be in some small proportion to the gracious benefits bestowed?

Suppose that the rebel against the monarch of the east, when pardoned, and restored to place and power, and professing to be sincerely grateful, should nevertheless have declared himself no longer bound to obey the laws of the realm, but should have exhibited his superiority to them by transgressing their behests; and suppose that he should have boasted of this liberty of his, and based its assertion on the ground that he had already been forgiven most flagrant crimes, his conduct would have been called monstrous, and the narrative of it incredible. But this is practically the creed and the behaviour of the Antinomian, who refuses to be subject to the directions of Heaven. He says he has found free pardon for all his sins through the blood of the Son of God, and being accepted in the Beloved, he is free

for ever from the claims of the moral law. It is of no further use to him. He is under obligation to it no longer. Any doings of his, whether good or bad, cannot affect his salvation, for he is already saved. His sins in the future, as in the past, are all forgiven; and he cannot fall again into condemnation, for he is now under grace for ever.

I once knew a person of this stamp who carried on a considerable wholesale business, and occupied for a time a pretty good position in a great commercial city. In some departments of Christian duty he showed no little apparent zeal. Often did he speak of his happiness and security as a believer in the Saviour, and of the glorious liberty of Christ's people. He was dead to the law, and the law was dead to him. Neither in prayer nor praise would he confess sin, or ask for pardon, for all his guilt had been taken away when he became a believer in Jesus. He refused of course to join in singing such penitential psalms as the fifty-first; for in nothing could he now offend, and for nothing did he require to ask forgiveness. He was a man in Christ, and free from obligation to the law. For a while I could not but stand by and wonder whereunto this would grow. Private inquiry ere long convinced me that the man was self-deceived, and soon he showed himself a deceiver. His business acquaintance discovered that his word could not be relied on, that he would cheat in buying and selling

when he could; and the end was, as might have been expected, bankruptcy and disgrace.

It is to be feared that there are many who follow Antinomianism in practice, who would scarcely announce its principles as being their creed. Not long since I heard of one of this class—a remarkably pious man as all his acquaintances believed. He lived in good style, and was not lacking in hospitality. In manner and speech very persuasive and gentlemanly; and so anxious to extend the kingdom of Christ, that a half hour could not be spent in his company, without the question being put as to whether his friend had given his heart to Jesus, and was assured of salvation. A struggling widow, a distant relative of his own, had, with the assistance of her family, scraped together a little money for her declining years. This smooth-tongued professor talked her into lending him a hundred pounds for a week or two. "He was just in a little temporary difficulty through the non-arrival of expected remittances. He was possessed of ample means, though unable for the moment to command them; but he was certain of being able to pay within a fortnight, and then he would return the money without fail, and with most grateful thanks." How could the widow refuse such an ostensibly wealthy man—one so kind, and so very religious withal? The sum desired was handed over without any proper voucher,

for could not the widow trust to the honour of her apparently godly and most gentlemanly friend? Alas for misplaced confidence! Weeks and months passed without repayment, one frivolous excuse after another being made, when the borrower was urged to fulfil his promise. At length, his name appeared in the bankrupt list, and the poor widow was swindled out of her hard-won savings. Even after his failure, this man, most orthodox, most pious, so far as words could go, managed somehow to continue his very comfortable style of living. He still professed to be a follower of Christ, though he would not deny himself what he had been accustomed to, and though the victim of his chicanery had, therefore, to suffer without redress!

"What are these wounds in Thine hands, long-suffering Redeemer of men?" "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my (professed) friends."

In his second epistle Peter tells us that his beloved brother Paul had written "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Verily, the errors of Antinomians are connected, not with the abstruse, but with the first and simplest lessons—the A B C—of the Gospel; and no more unanswerable proof of the desperate wickedness, and blindness, and deceitful-

ness of the human heart can be had, than their stumblings at God's truth supply.

Surely there is nothing difficult of comprehension in such announcements as these:—"Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people *from their sins.*" "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us *from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*

Almost every page of the Bible might be quoted as a testimony against the pernicious doctrine regarding which we are writing; but not to weary the reader, it may suffice now to glance at a few passages which exhibit the peculiar care with which the Holy Ghost guided the sacred penman, when treating of the liberty of the Christian, and especially of his deliverance from the law. Does the Apostle say, "Ye are *not under the law*, but under grace"? It is immediately added, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

* See Matt. i. 21; Titus ii. 14; 1. Peter i. 16; Matt. v. 8; 1. John iii. 2, 3.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." (Romans vi. 14, 15, 16, 18.) Does he declare that "Ye also are become *dead to the law* by the body of Christ"? he forgets not the proper supplement, "that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans vii. 4.) And when he announces that "now we are *delivered from the law*, that being dead wherein we were held," the object of the freedom is also proclaimed, "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Romans vii. 6.)

The merest tyro in theology knows that the liberty of the Christian is simply from the condemning and exacting power of the moral law *viewed as a covenant of works*. In this aspect only is Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. From the law, as a rule of life, no rational creature is or ever can be free. For what is its sum and substance? Love to God, and love to our neighbours. To fulfil this law is to enjoy heaven even on earth; to neglect it is misery. It requires little consideration to perceive that for one to be set free to indulge every feeling but love is to be transformed into a very

Satan, and to become only a fit denizen of the region where enmity reigns eternally supreme.

And what a mad hallucination is the doctrine that man has been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and has the right to repose on the very heart of the God of love, only that he may do what he likes without fear of the consequences! To call God *my* Father, and yet to grieve Him by my perverse indulgences; to speak of Jesus as *my* Redeemer, and yet to be forging, by my self-pleasing, the nails to crucify Him afresh; between such professions and such practice there is no consistency. The honest follower of Christ, who has truly known and believed the love of God, too often, alas! falls under temptation; but his stumbles and his transgressions are his sorrow. He hates the sin which is within him, and which is too often manifested in his daily walk. His cry is, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Life itself he would cheerfully lay down to get quit of the abominations of the old man within him. But the Antinomian turns liberty into licentiousness. He makes Christ the minister of sin. He is not afraid to transgress, because the blood is already shed which cleanses from all guilt. Ah! it is in thunder peals that the Judge of all has spoken from heaven, in warning against such desperate wickedness—"If we sin WILFULLY after that we have received the knowledge of the

truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews x. 26-31.)

A wealthy and generous man, visiting a slave market, discovered among those who were exposed for sale a young woman overwhelmed with grief. On inquiry he learned that she had been delicately nurtured, and was in dread lest she should be purchased by a cruel master. The stranger waited on the owner, and having ascertained the price demanded, he paid the amount. Immediately he prepared the necessary certificate of freedom, and placed it in the young woman's hands. She could not realize his meaning. He left while she was trying to discover what had been done. The truth burst upon her mind, and then she ran after her deliverer. On her

knees she besought him to allow her to become his humble and obedient servant for ever; and to the bystanders, attracted by the weeping urgency of her pleading, she explained it all by the exclamation, "He has redeemed me! He has redeemed me!"

Such is always the proper effect of a right apprehension of the grace of God. When Isaiah's sin was purged, he was eager for Jehovah's service—"Here am I; send me." No sooner had Saul of Tarsus become truly acquainted with his Saviour, than he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Constrained by Christ's love, he no longer lived for himself, but for his Redeemer. The faith of God's elect never fails to purify the heart, and to work by love.

The same medicine, which is the best cure for Legalism, is a sovereign remedy for Antinomianism too. We cannot well contemplate the cross of Christ in the light of heavenly truth without losing our slavish fears, and being quickened to loving obedience. In sight of the tree on which the Lamb of God suffered for our sins, the tree round which mercy and truth, righteousness and peace entwine in loveliest and eternal embrace, guilty terror ought to be changed into adoring confidence, and rebellious enmity melted into child-like devotedness.

"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." There is no other certain proof that

we have rightly understood and really accepted His kindness in Jesus. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Utterly fallacious therefore is any hope in Christ which is undisturbed by permitted and unloathed sin. The blackness of darkness for ever must be its final doom. "Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

CHAPTER V.

The Saviour Accepted.

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THE SAVIOUR ACCEPTED.

NEARLY twenty years ago, an elderly friend of mine had a considerable number of young women under his care for religious instruction. On their intellectual culture in connection with Bible truth, he spent not a little labour; but his principal aim was to lead them to the Saviour. In every lesson he sought to enlighten and stir their consciences, and lost no opportunity of commending to their hearts the love that passeth knowledge.

One evening the subject of study was Isaac's marriage, as narrated in Genesis xxiv. All the salient points of the story were opened up, and illustrated from the manners and customs of the East; and many practical lessons for daily life were found in the interesting page. According to his usual custom, my friend concluded with a brief exhortation, in something like the following style :—

"There is One far more noble than any Isaac, who sends me to tell all of you who have not yet believed

His love, that He craves the chief place in your affections. I speak of Jesus, the Bridegroom of souls. Poor sinner, far from God and far from righteousness, He calls for thee. He offers thee heart for heart. If thou wilt give Him thyself to save and bless, He will give thee Himself to be thine everlasting portion. Thy safety and thy joy are to be found only in giving thyself *entirely* to Him. And if thou art willing to part with all He would not have thee retain, so that thou mayest be wholly and for ever His own, He sends two lovely bracelets to thee. On one is engraved PARDON—for all that receive Jesus are at once forgiven, and to them there is no more condemnation. On the other is stamped PURITY—and it is a sure token that He will deck the trusting heart with all the beauty of His holiness, and present her to His Father at length without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He sends a face jewel also—that JOY which lights up the countenance of all who open their heart-doors to the rays of His infinite love.

"My dear friend, yet unreconciled to thy Father in Jesus, suffer me now to be as an Eliezer of Damascus to thee, and to induce thee to accept the gracious offer of mercy. The Redeemer is willing to have thee *just as thou art*, and *just now*. I have no orders to say He will have thee to-morrow. *To come* NOW, and *to come a needy sinner as thou art*—these are His only terms. If thou wilt consent, the betrothal is made,

and thou mayest bedeck thyself with the jewels sent for thy use, and which are infinitely more valuable than all diamonds, or pearls, or gold. Say, 'I will go with Jesus—I will be His alone;' and assuredly thou shalt never have reason to repent thy decision."

The teacher ceased. The closing prayer and praise were offered, and the class broke up. Some looked impressed, but none remained to tell that they were willing to be Christ's.

Anxious to see some fruit from his labours, my friend ere long resolved to call upon a few of his scholars, with the view of speaking with them individually in private about the concerns of their souls. His first call was on two sisters. He could not manage to see them separately, and his visit was not so satisfactory as he desired. Proceeding a quarter of a mile farther, he came to the house where one of his pupils, a young woman of eighteen, resided with a married sister. It was the latter he met when he entered the well-furnished parlour. After a little friendly conversation, he intimated that he would like, if quite convenient, to have a private interview with his pupil. His desire was cordially granted; and the mistress of the house, leaving the apartment, sent in her younger sister. My friend's experience had taught him that the presence of even a single near relative will often prevent an honest utterance in

regard to religious feelings. Hence his wish to see his scholar for a brief period alone.

After the ordinary kindly salutations, my friend told her why he had called. He felt anxious that his pupil should decide for Jesus. He asked her whether she had come to know and feel that she was a sinner needing deliverance; and getting a plain affirmative, he proceeded to speak of Jesus and the offer of salvation in the gospel. Reminding her of the remarks he had made at the conclusion of the lesson on Isaac's marriage, and briefly recapitulating them, he put the question, "Wilt thou go with this man, Jesus? Are you willing, my dear young friend, to accept Christ, as your Redeemer from wrath and your Deliverer from sin? Are you willing to close with Him now?"

The young woman was very sober-minded, and almost matronly in her quiet self-possession and modesty. She could not disguise her feelings and play the hypocrite at any time; and when her teacher, with tenderest tones and tearful eyes, put these pointed questions, her response was given, with all the simplicity of her nature, in the softly spoken but distinct affirmative, "I am." Assuring her how happy he felt at her decision, he counselled her to deal without delay on this all-important subject directly with her Father in heaven. "Go to Him in secret prayer," said he. "Tell Him of your guilt and unworthiness; but tell Him also that you accept Jesus, the unspeak-

able gift of His love, as your Sin-bearer and Righteousness, as your Shield and your Strength; and that you now give yourself up to Him in Christ that He may make you His own for ever." She promised to act on her teacher's advice; and commending her to the Shepherd of Israel, he speedily departed. Next day she waited on my friend to tell him that the great transaction was completed, and that sweet peace filled her heart. He, however, continued to watch, with much of a father's care, over her spiritual welfare. By letters embodying suitable directions, and by little publications of a nature fitted to encourage her to cleave to Jesus, as well as by the exercises of the class which she still attended, he endeavoured to strengthen and help her onwards and upwards in the narrow way. Soon after her acceptance of the Saviour, she confessed her devotion to Him at His table; and my friend has had reason to thank God greatly on her account, for up to the present time she has been enabled to walk as a happy, humble, and truly consistent Christian.

The question put to Rebekah, when spiritualized as it was on the occasion now referred to, is very full of meaning. Every word affords instruction. Let us briefly consider it in this aspect; and may the Spirit of all grace enable both reader and writer to understand and to receive the things that are freely given to us of God.

"WILT—WILT *thou go with this Man?*" All who have reached the years of understanding, and are then saved from wrath and sin, *desire* so to be. None of them are delivered by force and without consent on their part. Christ draws them, it is true, but with the bands of love. His infinite excellency, His suitableness for every necessity of a lost sinner, His ability to save to the uttermost, His matchless kindness, and His gracious invitations—all exhibited in the gospel page—are the sweet attractions by which He wins the heart, already self-condemned. Especially by the crowning act of His love to sinners, the bearing of "our sins in his own body on the tree," does He affect our souls. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The proper response to His tender call, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," is no mere bodily movement; but an outgoing of desire towards Him, an expression of hearty willingness to be saved in His own way, and on His own terms, and made altogether and eternally His own. The offer on His part must be met by acceptance on ours; and thus only can the promise be fulfilled, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." As His own language intimates, the dreadful responsibility of refusing Him lies with us. "Ye *will not come* to me, that ye might have life." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye*

would not." Thus to reject His saving grace and love wrung tears from His eyes, as He looked on the infatuated people of Israel; and by similar unbelief we may yet grieve Him. Would we like to gratify Him? It can be done, in the first instance, only by closing with His mercy, offered without money and without price. Then in us "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

"THOU—*Wilt* THOU *go with this Man?*" Religion is an individual thing. We cannot be saved in the mass, by families or by companies. A connection with the most godly relatives, or with the purest church on earth, will deliver none from eternal death. Each man and woman, *each individual*, must deal alone with God. The prayer of the dying thief was, "Lord, remember *me:*" and Paul lets us see plainly how he acted for his soul's salvation in the well-known passage, "I know whom *I* have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what *I have committed unto him* against that day." *There* is the direct and personal transacting of a soul with the Saviour; and if any one has not thus dealt simply and sincerely with Christ, I more than fear that he is yet unsaved. Dear reader, it is *thyself* the Saviour wants. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock; if ANY MAN hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." If thou art willing, Christ is; and an eternal covenant of

friendship may this moment be sealed between Himself and thee. Shut thine eyes from considering the case of others; and in the secret of thine own heart give the Master Himself the answer to the question, "Wilt *thou* go with this Man, Christ Jesus?"

"*Wilt thou* GO *with this man?*" "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," said Jesus. We must, if we would be Christ's, be ready to part with all that we may win Him, and be found in Him. We must turn our backs, of course, on whatever is impure in thought, and speech, and action. We must *go* from even proper things, things in themselves innocent, if they would prevent us from keeping close by the Saviour. From all our own self-righteousness, and self-admiration, and self-pleasing, we must *go*; and our progress must be downward in lowliness of spirit, outward in deeds of holy love, upward in heavenly desires and aims. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must, like Paul, "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Thus does the true Christian advance, till grace end in glory. Then shall all who *go* with Christ now *be* with Him for ever, and *be like Him*, for they shall see Him as He is. Blessed consummation of all tears, and struggles, and prayers, and toils below! Once within the gates of pearl, they "shall *go no more out.*"

"WITH—*Wilt thou go* WITH *this Man?*" It is often painful to the human heart to tear itself away from what it naturally likes, and to choose Jesus only for its all in all. When, however, we yield to His pleading love, we come to realize that His fellowship is better than life. In the Song of Solomon all true believers are pictured to us as leaning on the Saviour's arm, sitting under His shadow with great delight, holding Him fast with the hands of faith and love, and admiring Him as the chiefest among ten thousand, and as altogether lovely. Paul speaks of glorying in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; and Peter declares that believers in his day, even when sorely tried, rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory in their unseen, but ever present Lord. It is all true still in the experience of God's children. Christ's love, accepted, makes up for the loss of all creatures; and they who have tasted it in truth must go *with* Him. "Whither Thou goest, O Jesus! I will go; and where Thou lodgest I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and Thy God my God."

"THIS—*Wilt thou go with* THIS *Man?*" Different is He from all other men. He could say, "Before Abraham was, I am." He is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." On His vesture and on His thigh His name is written, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF

LORDS." He is "Emmanuel, God *with* us," and God *for* us. The silver and the gold of earth, and the wealth of heaven, are His. All power in heaven and earth He wields. Angels and archangels acknowledge Him as their Creator and Upholder, and watch obediently for His commands. Yet however glorious and rich He is in Himself, and as the heir of all things, all His glory and all His wealth are made over to the needy sinner who chooses Him as his soul's portion. Surely such an offer should not be made light of! Such a gainful proposal should not be rejected! Why not say *now*, and *decidedly*, "*I will go with this man*"?

"MAN—*Wilt thou go with this* MAN?" He is indeed the "child born, the Son given, the brother born for our adversity." Though very God of very God, He is perfect man withal—with human feelings and sympathies, and yearnings—full of compassion, ready to receive His sinful brethren, delighting to fill aching hearts with peace that passeth all understanding. See Him as He weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. Watch Him as the sick and dying crowd around seeking help. Never one came and went uncured away. Consider Him as He toils along the streets of Jerusalem under His heavy cross, and forgetting all His own sufferings, looks, with divinest pity, on the poor women weeping for Him, and cries, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." Gaze

on Him, as He bleeds and dies under His Father's wrath, that you, dear reader, might be saved; and as you muse on His infinite tenderness and love, say what answer you will give to the question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" May your answer be in the spirit, if not the words of Angelus Silesius:—

"O Love, who once in time wast slain,
Pierced through and through with bitter woe;
O Love, who wrestling thus didst gain
That we eternal life might know;
O Love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be."

(*Lyra Germanica.*)

The offer of full and free salvation is thus assuredly very plain, yet some honest inquirers are long in closing definitely with it. Let me submit a single case in illustration.

A gentleman of my acquaintance had introduced to him three or four young men, who professed to be seeking salvation. One of these had much difficulty in coming to the Saviour. Well aware that he needed salvation from guilt and sin, he wished to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God; but his feelings towards his Father in heaven and the Redeemer of the lost were so cold, and his heart was so *very hard*, that he was ashamed to approach while in such a condition. He was very diligent in studying his Bible, in attendance on the Sabbath ministry

of the Word, and at prayer-meetings on ordinary evenings, at which many truly gospel addresses were delivered; but for a considerable period he remained in the same uneasy mood. My friend had many interviews with him. At first he endeavoured to open up to him the all-sufficiency of Christ's work, how His blood cleanseth from all sin, and how He is "made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (or glorification)." Then he sought to explain that Jesus is given to whosoever will have Him—enforcing the idea by quoting such texts as these:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him (or receives Him as his own Saviour) should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. xxii. 17). Changing his method slightly, my friend proceeded to show that not merely have we the assurance that "*whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," but that in fact God the Father and God the Son are *actually entreating sinners to accept salvation*:—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, *as though God did* BESEECH *you by us; we* PRAY *you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*" (2. Cor. v. 20). Thereupon it was argued that such condescending love should sweep away every barrier, and the sinner fall at once into the open arms of his Redeemer, and his God. The

young man saw these things with much intellectual clearness, but he was still unmoved. At length, however, there was a discovery of his actual difficulty. It was the felt coldness of his heart. Delineations of God's love manifested in the crucified Sufferer of Calvary had somehow no effect. Earnest appeals to look out from himself altogether to *Jesus only*, and explanations that faith precedes feeling—that to get the gift of the Spirit we must come to Jesus (see John vii. 37, 38)—were alike unavailing. No resource seemed then to be left but to press the youth with God's commandment, as laid down in 1 John iii. 23:—"This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," and to urge him to do God's bidding. My friend plied this text in every possible way, but for a time no result was attained.

One night, after an assembly for prayer, the old Christian met his young acquaintance, and as he warmly shook his hand, at once accosted him with the inquiry:—"Well, is it done yet? Have you on your knees closed with Christ? Have you obeyed God and taken hold, as a poor lost sinner, of His unspeakable gift?" A somewhat sorrowful negative was the answer. "Go, then, my dear young friend, and do it this night ere you sleep," said the elderly gentleman; and after a few more pressing words, the young man, as they were parting, replied, "I will." He was as good as his promise. He sought his

closet before retiring to rest. He told God of his sinfulness, his deadness of heart, and his utter unworthiness; and then accepting Christ as the gift of love eternal, he gave himself away to Jesus to be saved and blessed. In the Saviour's name, too, he besought the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. But he rose from his knees all unchanged, *so far as feeling was concerned.* Love to God and the Redeemer seemed not to move his heart.

The youth went to bed, but not to sleep. As he lay ruminating on what he had just done, his thoughts were gradually turned to contemplation of Jesus. The history of His incarnation on our behalf, His obedience as our representative, His suffering unto death that our guilt might be removed, and peace with the holy and just God secured for ever to all who hide under His covert, passed before the youth's mental vision with the vividness of a panoramic scene. Having closed with the offer of salvation, he began to feel he had now an interest in all these things. As he mused on them his heart melted. The love of God was shed abroad within him by the Holy Ghost, and awakened burning love to the Saviour and to his *now reconciled* Father in Jesus. Tears of grateful joy fell fast. Brimful of heavenly consolation, he could but weep for very gladness. For days and weeks the same happiness continued—and his spirit overflowed with wonder, love, and praise.

Years passed, and the subject of these experiences was enabled to walk humbly and faithfully with God. In season and out of season he laboured, and is still labouring to extend the kingdom of Christ; and large numbers have had to thank him as the instrument who led them into the blessed hope of the gospel.

The case of this young man should not be made by any one a pattern or a standard. Every mind has its own peculiarities, and each conversion has its own spiritual history. The grand lesson which it carries appears to me to be this—that *in whatever state of heart and soul a man may be when the offer of Christ to save him is presented, the offer should be at once accepted and the Redeemer embraced with the arms of faith.* To delay is to remain in a state of alienation from God, and thus to imperil all.

Already it has been shown from Scripture that God in Christ is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him. *If they give consent,* the transaction is completed. God is willing; my reader, are you? If you are, who shall separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

CHAPTER VI.

Strong Consolation.

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STRONG CONSOLATION.

IN Mr. Moody-Stuart's interesting Recollections of the late Dr. John Duncan, we are told "that any simple statement of the Gospel had a great attraction for him. The simpler it was, he enjoyed it the more, if it was not controversial, but the genuine utterance of the heart. The account of redemption from the lips of an African woman, a slave, impressed him deeply; he liked to repeat it in conversation, and on one occasion at a meeting for prayer, he stood up and said without further remark of his own, "I have never heard the Gospel better stated than it was put by a poor negress: '*Me die, or He die: He die, me no die.*'"

Truly, this brief utterance of the humble black woman might put many philosophical theologians to the blush, for they too often mystify what is plain enough to the meek and simple, and by much learning darken counsel. How stands the matter? I am a

sinner, and deserve to die, unless an Almighty Saviour assume my place and die in my stead. The Lord from heaven has come, and having taken on Him our nature, His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Because of His death in our room, free forgiveness is proclaimed to every sinner who is willing to return to his justly offended Father in heaven. He that accepts Christ as his Redeemer shall never perish; or as the negress put it in the single sentence of which the learned Doctor was so fond, "Me die, or He die: He die, me no die."

Of the awfulness of the sufferings of Christ, when "Jehovah laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," and He was made a curse for us, the profoundest thinkers can understand but little. The depth is too great for the human mind to fathom, the intensity too terrible for creature-intellect to comprehend. Few on earth were, however, better fitted for considering this subject than Dr. Duncan, and one who studied under him when he was Professor of Hebrew in Edinburgh, has recorded for us how much he was affected when the theme was before his mind. Let me quote it from the volume of Recollections to which I have already referred:—

"In the winter of 1864, Dr. Duncan was reading part of Isaiah with his senior class. The particular passage I cannot remember, nor does it matter, for it only served as a suggestion of the cry in the first verse

of the 22nd Psalm, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' By the time Dr. Duncan had reached that point, he had left his desk, and, bent nearly double, was pacing up and down in front of the students' benches, his snuff-box and pocket-handkerchief in one hand, a huge pinch of snuff occupying the fingers of the other, but utterly forgotten in the absorbing interest of his subject, our Lord's sufferings for sinners, which he was turning over, and looking at, now on this side, now on that, but all with a loving reverence, and as one who spoke in a half-sleeping vision, when suddenly a flash went through him as if heaven had opened. He straightened himself up, his face kindled into a rapture, his hand went up and the snuff scattered itself from the unconscious fingers as he turned to the class, more as it seemed for sympathy than to teach—'Ay, ay,' he said; 'Ay, ay, d'ye know what it was—dying on the cross, forsaken by His Father—d'ye know what it was? What? What? It was damnation—and damnation taken lovingly!' Then he subsided into his chair, leaning a little to one side, his head very straight and stiff, his arms hanging down on either side beyond the arms of his chair, with the light beaming from his face, and the tears trickling down his cheeks, he repeated in a low, intense voice, that broke into a half sob, half laugh in the middle, 'It was *damnation*,—and He took it *lovingly*.' No saying of the many I hav

heard from him, nothing in all his manner and expression ever struck me like this."

To one who knows that he is an offender against the Majesty of Heaven, nothing can bring peace and comfort, except the knowledge of this—the perfect sacrifice which Christ Jesus presented on our behalf, when He offered up Himself. This propitiation was for the utterly lost and undone, and however vile we may think ourselves, we are entreated to take hold of it as our own all-sufficient plea.

"For myself," said the same notable divine, on one occasion, "for myself, I cannot always come to Christ direct, but I can always come by *sin*. Sin is the handle by which I get Christ. I take a verse in which God has put Christ and sin together. I cannot always put my finger upon Christ and say, 'Christ belongs to me,' but I can put my finger upon sin and say, 'Sin belongs to me.' I take that word, for instance, 'The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.' Yes, lost, lost,—I'm lost; I put my finger upon that word and say, 'I'm the lost one; I'm lost.' Well, I find that 'The Son of Man is come to save the lost;' and I cry out 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'"

The death of Christ, by which He opened up to sinners the way of salvation, is thus life to a lost world. But it is the death of Him *who speedily arose from the dead* that is our consolation. "Blessed," ex-

claimed the apostle Peter, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "If Christ be not risen," said Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Ye are yet in your sins."

The resurrection was the proof that Christ was what He professed to be—the Eternal Son of God. It declared plainly that He had fully atoned for the guilt of a sinful world, and that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. To the Jews of Paul's days, the doctrine of the crucified but risen and exalted Jesus was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The descendants of Jacob now existing, as well as the self-styled philosophers of modern times, continue to scoff at these foundation-truths of the Christian faith. It seems to them an utter absurdity that "the Dust of the Earth can be upon the throne of the Majesty on High"—that the Son of a poor Jewish virgin can be the Son of God, and though once crucified in weakness, is now and for ever exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. What the wise of earth cannot receive is the joy and rejoicing of the humble believer. That the Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable Son of God was made flesh that He might die for His own creatures, and rise again for their salvation, is plainly the revelation

of the Bible. To the meek and lowly mind, the mere statement of such an amazing act embodies the proof of its divine origin. Never could created imagination, in its wildest flight, have attained of itself to such a conception. The thought is all too wonderful to have sprung in any heart but that of Jehovah, or to have been carried through by any but Him, who is Himself the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. What the Lord planned, He completed. When the Incarnate Son of God had by Himself purged our sins, He resumed, but in a glorified human body, His seat on the Eternal throne. Here is consolation for every distressed conscience. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Or, as the poor African put it, "Me die, or He die: He die, me no die."

That faith may be strong and hope bright, in the minds of His trusting people, is the object at which our Father aims in the heaping of promise upon promise in the Bible pages. But as if He would put it beyond their power to cherish a single doubt, He has adopted a stronger measure still. His oath has been uttered in confirmation of His promise, so that "strong consolation" may be ministered to repentant sinners. Read the Old Testament form of it in Isaiah liv. 7 to 10:—

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but

with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

The New Testament exhibition of the same cheering assurance is to be found in Hebrews vi. 16 to 18:—

"For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things (namely, his promise and his oath), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

In explanation of the effect of the oath of Jehovah, it will be desirable for us to look for an instant at some statements of the Apostle in the seventh chapter of Hebrews. He there refers to the abolition of the Jewish priesthood, and the setting up in its place of

one unchangeable and everlasting Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Aaronic priesthood was, indeed, ordained by Heaven. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," and his descendants. They were, however, ultimately deprived of the honour, and another appointed in their room. And will not He in His turn be removed? Paul shows that now *no further change can occur*, and explains in a single sentence how we may know this—verse 21, "Those (Jewish) priests were made *without an oath*; but this (Jesus Christ) *with an oath* by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

From these observations it appears plain that, in certain circumstances, Jehovah may alter arrangements which He Himself has made; but what He swears to *shall never, can never* be revoked. The promise of salvation to all who welcome the gift of His Son as their Saviour is indeed sure and certain. It has been spoken by Him who cannot lie, and is grounded on the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer. But to make security doubly sure, to show the impossibility of God's favour in Christ being ever in any circumstances revoked, and so to let faith feel that its footing is firm on the Rock of Ages, Jehovah confirms His promise by His oath. Well, then, may every trusting heart burst into praise, and

with Isaiah sing the joyful song, "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

That we may not be saying to ourselves, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," let us more definitely, but very briefly, inquire who may take the comfort which God's promise and oath are meant to convey. The passage already quoted from the sixth chapter of Hebrews distinctly answers the question. They are those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." That hope is Christ—Christ, the Almighty Saviour. Before any one ever flees to the Redeemer, he must have realized that he is a guilty sinner, ready to perish; that behind is the Avenger wielding the Sword of Eternal Justice, and that nothing which his own arm can effect will stay execution. Lost and undone, he despairs of finding any other shelter, and therefore runs into the open door which Christ sets before him. Henceforth he abides under the covert of the crucified Jesus, the God-man who is the only safe hiding-place from the storm of divine wrath.

This, however, is not all the salvation which we require, and which the Word made flesh affords. He is called Jesus because he saves His people from their sins. They who rightly look to Christ to shield them from the punishment of their transgressions, cling to

Him also for deliverance from every sinful thing. Temptation often assails them, but they cleave to their Saviour for preservation. When they cry to their Almighty Friend, their foes are turned back. They become conquerors through Him that loves them, and of whose strength they take hold.

Let each of us test ourselves. Let us ask whether we have fled for refuge from wrath to Christ, and are constantly abiding under His shadow. Let us inquire whether we know Jesus as our own actual Saviour from sin's power and sin's very presence. Do we appeal to Jesus as often as temptation assails, and do we thus find relief from evil? Surely we shall know in our own consciousness whether we have thus run to Christ, and are thus abiding in Him. If we have not fled to Him for refuge from wrath, and are not cleaving to Him for preservation from sin, we can have no part in His salvation. God's promise and God's oath ensuring mercy are not for us; but our portion is with the unbelievers. Of them Jehovah has said, "So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."

Notice now the unchangeableness of the love of Jehovah—more stable far than the strength of what we call the everlasting hills. As compared with the brevity of man's existence on earth, the mountains seem to be fixed for ever. In reality, they are continually crumbling away. The atmosphere and the

rain which falls on them are breaking them very slowly but gradually down; and in course of ages they change greatly, and would ultimately be levelled. They, and the earth of which they form a part, are doomed, however, to a more rapid destruction. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." Amidst the universal conflagration, believers in Jesus shall lift up their voices and sing, "God is our refuge and strength, therefore will not we fear." As the gorgeous palaces of the wealthy fade away amidst the flames, and the jewels, and the gold, and the grandeur of this world disappear amidst the fire which enwraps the entire globe, Christ's people shall be safe beside their King upon His throne. Joyfully will they look down upon the awful scene, for then shall they fully realize the rich delight and ample security of the oath-confirmed promise, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

The wine of strong consolation which we are presently considering is needed constantly, however, in the pilgrimage of life. It is for daily use that it is supplied from the treasury of grace, and truly wise

are they who are gifted with skill to employ it aright.

Here is a simple-minded and honest follower of the Lord Jesus. Under a sudden attack of temptation he has slipped and fallen. He is writing bitter things against himself. His unfaithfulness, his ingratitude, the grief which he has occasioned to his Redeemer, the dishonour he has done to his Father in heaven, stand out before the eye of his conscience in the blackest colours. He is tempted to think that his sin is beyond forgiveness; that the bolt of divine vengeance must cast him speedily into the pit of woe. The promise comes, however, to his mind—"The blood of Jesus cleanseth from *all* sin: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He hastens to the throne of grace, and lays before the Lord all his folly. He seeks refuge under the covert of Christ's blood and righteousness. *The strong consolation is for him.* Let him be assured that God's kindness shall not depart from him, and then will he run with buoyant step in the way of God's commandments.

There is another Christian mourning because of the liveliness of his besetting sins. Ofttimes it seems to him as if he had never believed at all—as if he could not have been ever rightly converted. Corruption is so strong within, that he can hardly discern any gracious feeling. Test him fairly, however, and you will

find that he would not like to part with Christ; yet he is afraid that he shall perish. The strong consolation is assuredly for him also. Let his faith grasp the oath-confirmed promise; and as he looks up to the smiling face, and hearkens to the strengthening words of his Father in Jesus, the plagues of his heart will cease to harass him severely, and he will become a conqueror through redeeming love.

The case of Asaph, as detailed in the 73rd Psalm, finds many parallels among the people of God in all ages. While the wicked around are fat and fair and flourishing, the humble folk who walk with God are sorely perplexed by the providential dispensations which are measured out to them. Very apt are they then to cry out, "Verily we have cleansed our hearts in vain, and washed our hands in innocency; for all the day long have we been plagued, and chastened every morning." Under such trials they should at once betake themselves to the overflowing spiritual comforts, which are laid up for their support. Has not their Father promised that all things shall work together for their good? Is not Jesus head over all things for the eternal welfare of them that hide in Him? And has not Jehovah sworn that His kindness shall not depart? As they consider these encouragements, they will be comforted; and helped to rejoice in Him who is the strength of their heart and their portion for ever.

All the promises of God are, as a negro expressed it, "*certain sure*" in Christ. To know them in their fulness and richness, and to understand that they are all guaranteed to us by the oath of Jehovah if we are hiding in the Redeemer, is the best preparation for the cloudy and dark day of trial. While the sky is bright, then, let us cull them from the pages of the Word of God, and lay them up as cordials for future use. Especially let us see to it, that we have a right to them which cannot be gainsaid in the Court of Heaven. All of them are ours if we are Christ's. Have we given ourselves wholly and for ever to Him? That is the question of questions for us. If it has not yet, as we fear, been perfectly done, *let us do it again*—LET US DO IT NOW. "Then the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed;" but we shall evermore have the strong consolation of Jehovah's oath-confirmed promise, "My kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed."

CHAPTER VII.

John's Scholars and John's Lesson.

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"Little children, abide in Him."

A POPULAR preacher of the last generation used occasionally to picture to his hearers, in a fanciful way, some of the interesting employments of the glorified state. He imagined one crowd flocking to enjoy the voice and the harp of David, another to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, a third to hear the rapt utterances of Isaiah; "but as for me," the orator used to add, "I would go to hearken to the eloquence of Paul."

It would assuredly be an enjoyment of the highest order, for any Christian on earth to listen to a discourse from the living lips of the greatest theologian of all the Apostles. With extensive human learning as the handmaid of the Divine truth which he always gloried in proclaiming, with a wonderful logical power which found its fitting companion in the intensity of his loving devotion to his crucified and exalted Re-

deemer, one can but feebly imagine how the judgment and the affections would alike be carried captive, as the Apostle of the Gentiles exhibited and illustrated his subject under the guidance of the Divine Spirit. The holy boldness and loving ardour of Peter, and the awe-inspiring but practical style of James, would also attract many admirers; but certainly not a smaller audience would greet the prelections of the disciple who may be fitly styled "the apostle of love." His hearers would gather around him, expecting to behold in his countenance some rays reflected from the only human face, which ever shed on earth the full brightness of the invisible God—to hear some words in their sweet tones and touching tenderness, like those which used to fall from the mouth of Him who spake as never man spake—to feel some thrilling of heart, such as filled with ecstasy the soul of him who was so often wont to lean on the very bosom of Eternal Love.

Though deprived of the personal presence of the apostles now referred to, we can never be sufficiently grateful to the supervising care of the Great Teacher, under whom they laboured, for the specimens of their lessons which are transmitted to us in the Sacred Canon. As we study their instructions with regard to the truth as it is in Jesus, we may at times realize in spirit something of their very presence, and bow with them in lowliest adoration before the throne of Him, who

hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own infinitely precious blood.

For the present let us visit the school and listen to the teaching of John. We open the door just as he is drawing an interesting lesson to a point; and we hear him summing up his counsels in the words, "Little children, abide in Him." (1 John ii. 28.)

Whether considered naturally or intellectually, his scholars are not all of one age or stature. They are described in verses 13, 14, and 18 of the same chapter as fathers, young men, and little children. To the whole class, however, the epithet, *little children*, is applied in verses 1, 12, and 28, and throughout the rest of his first epistle; but a different Greek word for *little children*—a term expressive of more tender affection—is there employed. By John then, as by Paul in writing to the Galatians, all pupils of whatever age were addressed as *little children*. Why it was so, it will be my endeavour immediately to explain; but in an important sense, those among John's scholars who were really little children as to years, were also fathers and young men. John describes the fathers as those who had "known him that is from the beginning," namely, the Word of life, who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. As to the young men, he says they had "overcome the wicked one, and were strong, and had the word of God abiding in them." Intellectually, of course,

children in years cannot usually match fathers or young men; but, spiritually, very little children may be fathers in knowledge, and young men in devotion. If they have felt the love of God in Christ, and with trusting hearts have therefore begun to lisp "our Father," they have attained the essence of all true knowledge, and however soon called away, they shall "die an hundred years old." The same love realized will make them strong as young men in fighting and overcoming the wicked one. They will delight in the Word which tells of Jesus, and learn to hate everything that would grieve Him who died on the cross for them.

The term *little children* was no doubt used by John to all whom he addressed, whatever might be their ages, as one of special endearment. In this he followed the Master. It was during the last meeting with His disciples in the upper chamber, before He went out to Gethsemane, that He said, in tenderest accents, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." (John xiii. 33.)

More, however, than this is embodied in the designation. We are reminded by it of that scene in Capernaum when Christ rebuked the carnal ambition of His followers. Calling to Him a little child, and setting him in the centre of the circle, He said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 3.) On that

occasion He referred to those characteristics of little children, which must be possessed or diligently aimed after by every one who claims Him as his Saviour and his King. The same idea doubtless filled the mind of John; and not a little practical instruction may be gleaned by considering, briefly, some of those graces of character which are generally manifested in little children.

Little children are humble. They are not conceited because of their position or their talents. An infant prince will play with a peasant child on equal terms, and without a thought of assuming. The pride that by-and-by will sprout and grow, even with little aid from flatterers, is yet undeveloped; and happy would it be for every man if its seeds could be annihilated within him, before they begin to spring at all. The enjoyment of existence is much increased to little children by the absence of self-consciousness and self-conceit. Everybody who knows the plagues of his own heart will agree with Dr. Payson's remarks in a letter to a young minister:—"Some time since," he says, "I took up a little work, purporting to be the lives of sundry characters as related by themselves. Two of these characters agreed in saying, that they were never happy until they had ceased striving to be great men. It occurred to me at once that most of my sorrows and sufferings were occasioned by an unwillingness to be the nothing I am, and by consequent

struggles to be something. I saw if I would but cease struggling, and consent to be anything, or nothing, just as God pleases, I might be happy. My heart saw this, and consented to it; and I am comparatively happy. My dear brother, if you can give up all desire to be great, and feel heartily willing to be nothing, you will be happy too."

It is "the lowly spirit God hath consecrated for His abiding rest." Where He is absent there can be no true or lasting peace. In order to promote both their safety and comfort, He uses means to hide pride from those whom He draws after Himself. Afflictions, and temptations, which unveil the hidden evils of our nature, are often employed by Him for this purpose. Blessed is the result when our self-love is turned into self-loathing, and our self-admiring into self-abhorring. The servant who abases himself in the dust, and exalts only the Lord his God, is usually the chosen instrument by whom the Almighty operates most gloriously in subduing other rebels to His sway. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child," said Christ, "the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And this taking root downwards, in regard to the believer's opinion of himself, progresses more and more as the Divine life increases within. Spiritually he is ever becoming increasingly humble, and when really and perfectly transformed into a little child in heart, he is ready for the kingdom of glory.

How many shut themselves out from salvation by pride of station, or purse, or intellect! "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," simply because they will not strip off their vain-glory, and take pardon and acceptance as a free gift from God to the "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." It is hard to confess one's self as being ignorant, and base, and without claim to aught but what pure mercy may see fit to bestow; but without stooping thus we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Little children are receptive. On that very interesting occasion when infants were brought to the Saviour, and when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God"—He added the instructive words, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein." Children are great believers. They accept as true what is stated to them by those under whose charge they may be placed; and when a promise is made, they grasp it firmly, and expect fulfilment. Bring an attractive present near, and offer it lovingly to an infant not yet fit to walk, and the child will seize the gift without questioning your willingness.

In spiritual as well as in temporal things this principle holds with regard to little ones. Let me offer some examples.

A little boy one night was suddenly seized with croup. He became so ill that he thought he was likely to die. The lessons he had been taught as to the greatness and goodness of God were not forgotten, and he trembled at the prospect of appearing before the throne. Then, however, he remembered that Jesus had died for sinners—that His blood can cleanse from all sin—and that he who cometh to God in Christ shall not be cast out. He sprang to his knees, and prayed most earnestly. "Oh God!" he cried, "wash me from all my sins in my Saviour's blood, and then I shall be whiter than the snow." Almost immediately after this his anxiety fled. "Mother," said he, "I need not fear now to die, for I am washed in my Saviour's blood." He believed the promise that if we ask we shall receive, and that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

A girl was weeping at the door of the minister of the congregation with which her parents were connected. The good pastor found her there, and invited her to enter his study. Kindly inquiring the reason of her grief, the child replied—"Oh, sir, I have been a great sinner all my life. I have lived seven years without God and without Christ. Do you think such a sinner as I am can be forgiven?" Then the minister explained to her the Gospel—that God so loved the world as to give His dear Son to die, so that He might be able to pardon us, and that whosoever accepts

Christ as his Saviour from wrath and sin is forgiven at once and becomes a child of God. The young inquirer welcomed the good tidings with all her heart. She was filled with joy and peace in believing, and lived to prove by the training up of a family of her own for God, that she had as a little child received the grace of God in truth.

In this receptiveness of their minds and hearts, children are really teachers to those of larger growth. There are too many who profess to recognise the Bible as the message of God to man, but who, nevertheless, do not receive its declarations, whether of judgment or mercy, as true. They practically believe nothing of the wrath which awaits those who neglect salvation, and as little do they heed the promises made to the lost and undone, if they will but hide in the provided refuge. There are many others again, who, when convinced of sin, refuse to be comforted. Eternal life is held out as a free gift, but they hesitate to accept it. Perhaps they are not disposed to allow that they question the willingness of the Offerer; but they are in doubt as to whether the gift is actually meant for such vile beings as they are, and the result is practically the same. Why not receive what is presented to us by our Father in heaven? "My Father *giveth* you the true bread from heaven." "*Whosoever will, let him take* the water of life freely." There is no presumption then in taking; but it is the height of presumption and

the blackest ingratitude to continue doubting and questioning, and thus in reality putting away from us the Saviour, whom God in His love is so earnestly urging us to receive.

Little children are teachable and submissive. The loving instruction of the father or mother, or even the nurse, is, when in a form suited to the infant mind, readily attended to. Let a kind parent take his little boy by the hand, and the child will go anywhere, delighted to be in such honoured company, and anxious to please. If even the bitterest medicine be presented by a truly affectionate mother to her little one, with a frank explanation of the reason why it must be taken, the child will not refuse the potion. Sometimes indeed the child will refrain from gulping down the draught, however nauseous, and actually sip it, as if it were a joy thus to please mamma.

In spiritual things the same can be said of all God's children, whether young or old. Their ears are ready to listen to the Father's voice. With the Psalmist they pray, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end;" and like the Incarnate Son, it is their meat and drink to do and to bear their Father's will.

A minister who was placed in a district on the west coast of Ireland, one Sabbath observed a little boy, clad in rags, standing in a passage of his church right opposite the pulpit. The child's face betokened the

greatest solemnity, and eagerness to learn. He seemed indeed to be feeding ravenously on the words which the good minister uttered regarding the way of salvation. Sabbath after Sabbath, for some weeks, the same earnest listener appeared in the house of God; but he came in always so near the time for beginning the service, and left so abruptly at its close, that though the clergyman wished to accost him, the opportunity of doing so was not afforded. Some time had elapsed after the boy's last appearance in church, when a poor peasant called one morning on the minister, asking him to go and visit his dying child. "It is a long rough way over the mountains to my cabin, and I am really ashamed to ask you to go so far, sir," said the peasant; "but my child refuses to have any one but you. He is altogether an extraordinary boy, and talks a great deal about things I do not understand." The minister went without delay, in spite of a severe storm then raging. After a toilsome and exhausting journey, he reached a wretched hut, and there in a corner of the hovel, with no bed but some straw, he found his little hearer, at the point of death. No sooner did the child discover who had come, than sitting up and stretching forth his arms, he cried, "His own right hand hath gotten him the victory." It was the last effort of nature, and sinking back he expired. At church, six miles away from the hovel where his father dwelt, he had been the ready scholar, and learned in

whom he should trust for salvation. His final breath proclaimed how he was glorying in that Redeemer, to whose guiding and teaching he had so eagerly yielded himself.

It was a fine example of true docility and submission which a child exhibited when, having met with a severe accident, one of his limbs was about to be amputated. His mother was weeping beside him; but the brave little boy looked up, smiling in spite of all his suffering, and said, "It must be all right, dear mamma, for God makes no mistakes."

The proper position for every child of God is sitting, with Mary of Bethany, at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word. When learned, its directions will be followed; and in all circumstances, whether of joy or sorrow to the flesh, the child-heart will say, as did the only-begotten Son, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

I need not at present dilate on the *gentleness*, and *artlessness*, and *imitative nature* of little children. In these features they are types of those who are really born from above. The meekness and gentleness of Christ is communicated to all whom He introduces to the Father. Hypocrisy is foreign to the new heart—for truth in word and deed alone becomes the offspring of the God of truth. And in regard to copying their Father in heaven, every one of His children labours and prays to be perfectly conformed to His image.

Only one other point craves for a brief notice; namely, that

Little children are confiding. What sweet repose is theirs when in their mother's arms, or under their father's watchful care! They know in whom they trust, and therefore their confidence is unbounded. In grief, they flee to the arms which they are assured will be open to receive and enfold them in loving embrace. In gladness, they delight to tell their joy to the willing ears of those whose responsive smiles betoken an interest in their happiness.

It is the same with all who have known the Father in Jesus. "Mamma," said a boy of five years of age, "what would become of me if father and you were both dead?" "Indeed, my dear, I do not know," was the mother's answer. "Well, mamma," said the child, weeping as he spoke, "if you were both dead, God would keep me, and would never let me want. I don't know how He would do it; but I know He would never let me want." And quite as trustful was another child, a year younger than the one just mentioned. Walking along a dark road with a servant on a winter night, the boy exclaimed, "Don't be afraid, Betty. The great good Being takes care of us in the dark as well as in the light; by night as well as by day."

To go away alone into eternity severely tries the strength of the Christian's faith. A girl, not yet seven

years old, triumphantly bore the test. She had no fear when her hour was come. Her elder sister was sitting near, and the little invalid asked her to read the passage in the New Testament which narrates how Christ blessed little children. "How kind!" said the dying lamb, when her sister ceased. "I shall now soon go to Jesus. He will take me up in His arms, and bless me too. No disciple shall keep me away."

It may be thought by some that the ignorance of children makes them bold, where the older and better informed would be anxious and afraid. A true knowledge of the grace of God will, however, dispel fear, even when a dying believer thoroughly realizes his utter sinfulness. A clergyman from London, when on a visit to Scotland, called to see a sick friend, whose life was ebbing fast. He found his acquaintance in a very happy frame. After some serious conversation, the dying man, grasping the minister's hand, exclaimed, "Now, sir, I can with as much pleasure take hold of death by its cold hand. You may justly wonder at this, for I see and believe myself to be utterly unworthy; but, at the same time, I see Christ to be my great propitiation, and faith in His blood gives me ease. I see myself all vile and polluted, but I view Jesus as the fountain opened, and faith in Him supports me under a sense of my vileness."

Caryl says wisely and well, "The reason why God is trusted so little is because He is so little known."

Happy then the man who follows the recommendation of Eliphaz the Temanite, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace."

So much for the scholars. Let us glance now at the lesson of the apostle of love.

Abide in Him. To those still outside of the Christian family John had other advice; but to every one within that circle these words form the very sum and essence of all his teaching. As we might have expected, in this brief direction he but follows the Master-in-chief. "Abide in me," said Jesus; "continue (or abide) ye in my love."

This abiding involves a continued hiding under the covert of Christ's blood and righteousness, by all who have fled to Him as their Refuge from wrath and their Hope of glory. To whom else can they go? Where else can they repose with assured confidence of safety? Sinners by nature and by practice, they have but the one plea—"Christ hath died." Unable to produce by all their efforts any service that could satisfy justice and merit the blessing of heaven, they must borrow the infinitely glorious obedience of Immanuel in which to enwrap themselves. Now, and for ever, their enjoyment of God's smile depends on their wearing the robe of their Redeemer's righteousness—His obedience unto death. It cost Him untold labour and inconceivable agony to produce; yet *whosoever will* may have it as a free gift. What madness to refuse to put

it on and to hide beneath it! They who once realize its delightful security will dwell for ever under its ample folds.

Purification of heart and life, and strength to walk in the way of all God's commandments, are also required; and these are to be obtained only by abiding in Jesus. He is the living head of all believers. From Him flows the spiritual life-stream into every heart that clings to Him with loving confidence, effectually removing what is diseased and vile out of the spiritual nature, and strengthening and quickening it to the production of every holy fruit. Over His trusting people, also, He casts His protecting shield, to preserve them from the overwhelming attacks of spiritual foes. Cleaving close to Him, they cannot perish, for none can pluck them out of His hand.

There is no feeling of confinement or restraint in this abiding in Christ, but all the happiness of a true home. It is in reality neither more nor less than the continued reception and enjoyment of all the manifestations of the Redeemer's unspeakable grace and goodness towards those whom He delights to bless, all unworthy though they be. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue (or abide) ye in my love." What is this but saying—"With infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love, do I regard you who hope in Me for salvation. Let the thought of this love of Mine satiate your souls. Behold it in My

birth, My life on earth, My death—all on your behalf. Read it in every promise of the Gospel. Think of it, speak of it, sing of it, dream of it. When you lie down, when you rise up, when at work, when at leisure, let it be your unfailing solace and joy, your spring of action, your unceasing motive power. In health, let the remembrance of My love crown you with gladness. In sickness, let it be a downy cushion beneath your aching head, ministering sweet repose. In death, let it be felt beneath you, as the Everlasting Arms"?

O! this is the secret of a happy, holy life—to be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. It is this love which will make the kingdom of glory a heaven to the ransomed; and the believer who thinks most about it, and delights most in it now, enjoys already a rich foretaste of the blessedness of those who have entered the gates of pearl.

There is no use in saying "Abide in Christ" to one who till now has refused to hide in the Man, who is "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." *His first duty* is to flee to the stronghold—to run into the arms outstretched in pitying love—to accept the rest and peace and eternal safety which the Gospel presses him to receive. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven;" and what will the Christless soul do then? Happy, at that awful hour, the man who has

learned to sing, with the heart and understanding, the glorious melody of David, "In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

CHAPTER VIII.

Bells and Pomegranates; or, The Gospel and its Fruits.

CHAPTER VIII.

BELLS AND POMEGRANATES; OR, THE GOSPEL AND ITS FRUITS.

IN sorrow or in joy, men have found a use for bells. When a soul was hasting away into the unseen, the passing-bell was wont to announce to the neighbourhood the solemn fact; and when, "the bitter parting over," a dead body is being carried to the narrow house appointed for all living, the tolling from the church steeple declares that all flesh is grass, and that the healthiest and strongest should prepare for the certain change. The merry ringing of bells, again, sounds out the gladness of hearts when the marriage of people of consequence is celebrated, or a national or local event of a happy kind transpires.

For alarm, nothing is more exciting than the fire-bell, at midnight pealing out its dreadful message; and for inviting sweetness, what more delightful than Sabbath-bells calling on us to go up into the house of the Lord?

"Say, how canst thou mourn?
How canst thou rejoice?
Thou art but metal dull!
And yet all our sorrowings,
And all our rejoicings,
Thou dost feel them all!"

Who invented bells we know not, but probably they were devised, at a very early period of the world's history, by the musical genius of Jubal, who is called, in the fourth chapter of Genesis, "the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ." In Holy Writ there are but two special references to the use of bells. In the Prophecy of Zechariah, it is foretold that in the coming millennial days there is to be inscribed upon the bells of the horses "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." We find little of this kind of employment in our land for such instruments of music; but in a great continental city I have observed almost every horse employed for draught purposes, bearing a bell hung below or about his neck, and jingling as he trotted along. The prophecy I have referred to points to the time—would that it were come!—when every kind of traffic shall be carried on in a manner becoming the Gospel, and when Jehovah shall be recognized as "God over all, blessed for evermore."

The other scriptural reference to bells is in the description of the dress of the high priest of the Jews. (Exodus xxviii. 31, 35.) His outer garment

was called the ephod. It was a coat most magnificently embroidered with gold and blue and purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen. Bound round the waist with a curious girdle or sash as richly wrought as itself, the ephod had above itself, on the breast of the high priest, an embroidered square of a similar pattern; and set in gold and fastened on that square, were four rows of precious stones, three in each row, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The ephod covered only the trunk of the high priest's body. Worn underneath was a large garment, reaching down to his knees; it was called the robe of the ephod, and was all of blue. Round its bottom hem there was a strange fringe, composed of a golden bell and the imitation of a pomegranate, time about. The representations of pomegranates were made of blue and purple and scarlet wool; but the golden bells were real, and as the high priest went about his work, they rang in pleasant harmony. Especially was it incumbent on the high priest to wear this garment when he went into the holy place. As there he discharged the appointed service, the sound of the golden bells heard without, attested his being alive and active, and accepted in the intercessory work to which he was appointed. Pleading for the people, according to the will of God, the worshippers outside were emboldened to send up their supplications to Him who dwelt above the mercy-seat,

when they learned, from the ringing of the golden bells on the robe of the ephod, that their advocate within the veil was prospering in his appeal on their behalf.

The Mosaic ritual was figurative throughout of the Gospel dispensation yet to come. In many parts it typified the person and the work of the great High Priest, who was to appear and offer up a sacrifice sufficient for the sins of the world. The Jewish high priest, especially in his duties and his official dress, pictured to faith's eye the Redeemer who was to finish transgressions, and make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Did he enter into the holiest of all with the blood of a victim whose body was then being consumed amid the fire on the brazen altar? He spoke of the Messiah who should, in the fulness of time, with His own blood enter in once for all into the presence of God in heaven, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Did he wave the golden censer to and fro before the mercy-seat, and fill the place of the Divine presence with the perfume of sweet incense? He told of the great Intercessor who was to present the prayers of all humble supplicants before the throne on high, smelling sweet with the fragrance of His own perfect obedience to the death. Did he dress at times only in white? It was a foretelling of the absolute purity of Immanuel, and the spotlessness of His life. Did he bedeck himself

in his beautiful robes? He was prefiguring the excellency and unequalled beauty of the Lord our Righteousness in the sight of Jehovah. The precious stones on the high priest's shoulders, with the names of the twelve tribes thereon, exhibited in figure how Christ should bear up with His almighty strength all who are His people; while the breastplate, with the same twelve names on its twelve jewels, was a prophecy of the infinite grace of the great Mediator, bearing on His very heart every one that hopes in Him.

What meant then the golden bell and the pomegranate, time about, fringing all round the hem of the robe of the ephod? The sound of these bells was very pleasant to the worshippers in the court of the tabernacle or temple of Israel, telling as they did of the advocate within the veil, who was acting for them and prevailing according to the will of God. We have a better High Priest, one who can never die, and who, having entered into heaven itself, now appears in the presence of God for us. And may we not well believe that the golden bells on His robe are those melodious declarations of love and those alluring promises which give life and gladness to the soul, and which have all their value and significance only as they are connected with Him who is the substitute and surety of sinners, and whose blood cleanseth from all sin?

If the joyful sounds of grace to sinners were pre-

figured by the golden bells on the robe of the ephod, we shall not err greatly in supposing that the pomegranates were types of the results which always follow a right hearing of the sweet melody of the golden bells. As every golden bell was followed by its pomegranate, so every Gospel message is, when welcomed, succeeded by its appropriate fruit. The pomegranate is not only beautiful to the eye, but richly luscious to the taste, and full of seed to extend the blessings already possessed by itself. So with the fruits of grace. Not one of them but is lovely to the sight of God and man. In themselves refreshing and delightful, they carry spiritual seeds for propagation of the same rich joy which they enwrap. Blessed, they give forth blessing: just as on the other hand the fruits of sin are cursed, and scatter seeds to spread the destructive malady all around.

Let us hearken to the tinkle of some of the golden bells upon our great High Priest's robe, and observe the fruits which follow. The melody of the whole combined is love,—sovereign, rich, and free; but every one of them is articulate, and sounds out its own special message of tender grace. Every one therefore produces its own particular fruit; though truly, like the pomegranates on Aaron's garment, they have to God's eye, as it were, but one appearance: love in the creature, answering again to the manifestations of love by the Father of all.

Faith Cometh by Hearing.—A young man, a private teacher in the South of England, had become anxious about his soul.* His anxiety was deepened by the question put by a friend, "Are you a Christian?" He thought he had a right to answer, "Yes," because he had been baptized, and was a regular attendant at church. His friend tried to undeceive him, and showed him that unless he was truly a believer in Jesus, the Redeemer of the soul from wrath and from sin, there was no safety for him. Days and weeks passed by. The gloom thickened around him. He realized that he was yet without Christ, without God, and therefore without hope. He went to church, but his mind was absorbed with his own misery. He prayed, but relief came not to his wounded conscience, and he knew not how to escape from the horror of great darkness which hung around him. At length his spiritual ear caught a sound, as he was reading in the fifty-third of Isaiah. It was the ringing of one of the golden bells on the robe of the Great High Priest; and sweeter far than any melody of earth did the words seem to him: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." In a moment he understood that Jesus had died for sin-

* The facts are taken from Tract No. 62 of the Monthly Tract Society.

ners: the one, perfect, and all-sufficient Sacrifice; and as his mental eye was turned to behold Him on whose robe the golden bells are ever ringing, he forgot his fear; he was absorbed in the contemplation of love and grace Divine; he cast his soul on the Saviour. Then another bell rang in his ear; a counterpart of the first sweet utterance of grace: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Ah, those bells have been sounding in his ear, more or less distinctly, ever since. Sometimes, when the din and the bustle of earth for a little dull their sound, he no doubt becomes faint and weary; but he has only to stop the outer and open the inner ear to obtain reviving and strength. When those two golden bells which first calmed his troubled heart are heard again, clear and distinct, his step heavenward becomes firm, his eye brightens, the joy of his spirit is seen on his countenance, and his voice echoes the melody in the words, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

*Zeal and Courage added to Faith.**—A missionary had long toiled among a tribe of the savages of South Africa. Shut out from fellowship with all Christians, in a barren and miserable country, where he had often to employ the "fasting girdle" (a tight bandage round the stomach) to mitigate the gnawings of hunger, his endurance was severely tested. But later on in his history came a more fearful and trying crisis. Rain had been long withheld, and gaunt famine stalked through the land. Hundreds died, and hundreds more crawled about like living skeletons, digging roots or trying to seize worms and other creeping things for food, in order to sustain their fast-flagging life. The priests of the heathen declared that the want of rain was occasioned by the residence among them of the servant of Christ. A chief and twelve attendants appeared before the missionary, and ordered him and his to leave the place at once, or violent measures would be employed to make him. Behind the missionary stood at the moment his wife, with an infant in her arms. Her husband quailed not: he boldly faced the armed band, and calmly replied, "We were unwilling to leave you. We are now resolved to stay at our post. As for your threats, we pity you, for you know not what you do. We have suffered, it is true, and the Master whom we serve has said in His Word,

* The materials for this and the two succeeding illustrations were obtained from "A Life's Labours in South Africa."

'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another.' But though we have suffered, we do not consider that what has been done to us amounts to persecution. It is no more than we are prepared to expect from those who know no better. If resolved to get rid of us, you must take stronger measures to succeed, for our hearts are with you. You may shed my blood, or you may burn our dwelling. As for me, my decision is made. *I will not leave your country.*" Baring then his breast, and fearlessly confronting them, he added, "Now then if you will, drive your spears to my heart, and when you have slain me, my companions will know that the hour is come for them to depart." The savages were astonished. They could not execute their purpose: they felt that the doctrines which the missionary preached must be true.

And what could sustain the bold, unflinching courage which quailed not at such a trying moment? Only the sound of the bells on the robe of the heavenly Intercessor. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!" So rang the chimes in Robert Moffat's ear, and he feared not though thousands ten should set themselves against him. For fifty-two years he marched and toiled in Africa to the sweet music flowing from the skirt of his Master's robe; and still he is labouring, under the same cheering inspiration,

with the view of sending out to the scene of his life-work a complete edition of the Scriptures, in one of the languages most extensively prevalent there.

Love to the Brethren.—In one of the same missionary's early journeys in Africa, he and his companions were sorely distressed for want of food and water. After a toilsome day they had arrived at a heathen village; but neither appeals to the compassion of the inhabitants, nor the offer of what little payment they could make, could procure the slightest relief. Nay, the missionaries were ordered not to come near the village itself; and, exposed to wild beasts,—hungry, thirsty, and weary,—they were compelled to remain in the open field. At sunset they observed a woman approaching. She carried a bunch of sticks on her head, and a vessel of milk in her hand. These she laid down beside the strangers, and hasted away. Speedily she approached again with a cooking vessel on her head; in the one hand a leg of mutton, and in the other a pot of water. Kindling the fire, she put on the meat, and prepared a meal for the travellers. Not a word had she spoken all this time; but at length, in answer to the loving questions of the grateful strangers, she said, with tears running down her face, "I love Him whose servants ye are, and surely it is my duty to give you a cup of cold water in His name. My heart is full, and therefore I cannot speak

the joy I feel to see you in this out of the world place." This poor African woman was the only Christian in that heathen village. When a child, her tribe had been sojourning near a Dutch settlement in the Cape Colony. There she had found her way to a school, and learned to read Dutch. The teacher had presented her with a Dutch New Testament; and though she had been constrained by her people a number of years before to remove with them far from any European habitation, the truth as it is in Jesus was the comfort of her life. The New Testament she always carried about in her bosom. Drawing it thence as she told her history, she said, "This is the fountain whence I drink; this the oil which makes my lamp burn."

It is delightful to the follower of the Lamb to hear of such a hidden one hearkening continually to the joyful sound, and walking in the light of the Lord's countenance while all around her were sitting in the very shadow of death. It was the bells on the Great High Priest's robe which first attracted her heart and ever after sustained her, filling her with love to all her Master's friends. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This sweet sound drew her after Jesus; and then she heard another bell ringing: it said, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Her heart, possessed

by the love of her God and Redeemer, could not but obey; and as she laid her gifts at the feet of the brethren of Jesus, still another gladdening tinkle met her ear: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Peace and Joy in Death.—If happy hope, and unflinching boldness, and devoted love are awakened in human hearts by the ringing of the bells of which we are speaking, their notes are likewise enough to sustain the soul in the trying hour of death. Dr. Moffat tells of another African woman, who was fast hastening to her last home on earth. "Calling together her husband and their friends, she said, 'Behold, I am going to die!' Some started, others wept. 'Weep not,' she said, 'because I am about to leave you; but weep for your own sins and your own souls. With me all is well. Do not suppose that I die like a beast, to sleep for ever in the grave. No: Jesus has died for my sins; He has promised to save me, and I am going to be with Him.'"

Not less confident was the utterance of Hornel, a French Protestant pastor, who suffered martyrdom in 1683. For forty-four hours had he been tortured because of his unflinching confession of Christ. Every limb, every bone of his body had been broken, but he would not deny his Master. It was demanded of him

whether he would acknowledge himself a Roman Catholic. Boldly he answered: "How, my Lords! Had it been my design to have changed my religion, I would have done it before my bones had been thus broken in pieces. I wait only for the hour of my dissolution. Courage, courage, O my soul! Thou shalt presently enjoy the delights of heaven." Shortly before the executioner relieved him from his agony by a death-stroke with his sword, the martyr turned his eyes towards his wife, who had been permitted to approach. "Farewell once more, my well-beloved spouse," said he; "but know that though you may see my bones broken to shivers, my soul is replenished with inexpressible joys."

What could bear up the spirit under death in any form, but more especially under such dreadful anguish as Hornel and other martyrs for Christ have endured, save the sound of certain bells on the robe of the Royal Priest at God's right hand? One of them rings out clearly this reassuring word: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And another answers, "Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,

and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

Such cordials as these sweet words, heard by the ear of faith, excite a joyful expectancy in the soul, and buoy it up even amidst the waves of Jordan. And if, when all personal fears have thus been dissipated, there are anxieties about those to be left behind widowed and fatherless, there is a bell of which the sound once realized, dispels all such distress: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." Often have I heard from the lips of one, who is now herself for ever at rest on the bosom of her Saviour-God, of the last hours of her mother. There were gathered round the couch a large family, mostly very young. The dying one had indeed been a model manager, devoted to her children, and toiling unceasingly for their welfare. Long had she trusted in and loved her Redeemer, and walked in the light of His countenance. When, however, the last trouble came upon her, and hope of recovery had to be abandoned, though ready to depart so far as she herself was concerned, the thought of her dear babes, and their future without a mother, sorely burdened her heart. The struggle was severe but not long. Perfect peace soon again reigned within. It was the sound of this bell on the Great High Priest's robe that calmed her perturbed soul. With tenderest kisses and words of blessing she bade each little one farewell, not a tear

fouling her cheek; and then she calmly laid her down, and breathed out her soul into the hands of Him who had promised to preserve her, and those whom He called her to leave for a time behind.

Comfort to the Bereaved.—Whoever has hung over a grave's mouth and heard the dull rattle of the earth as it fell and covered up the remains of a beloved relative, can comprehend the need of consolation at such a painful moment. Ah, there I have seen a strong man weep who never wept before; and when all was over, and it was needful to return to the desolate hearth, what a bitterness was life, bereft of all that could render it a joy! At such an hour, there is only one instrument of music that can be endured,—only one that can dispel the horror of great darkness brooding over the soul,—it is the chime of bells on Christ's garment, speaking of immortality and resurrection and the glory of the redeemed. Hearken to the symphony: "Thy brother, thy sister, thy father, thy mother, thy wife, thy husband, thy son, thy daughter, shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and of the unseen world.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

As the heart listens to this sweet melody, its pain is soothed, its empty aching removed. The thought of the happiness of the departed becomes a comfort to the one left behind. Murmuring is changed into resignation; the bitterness of parting into the anticipation of a joyful re-union; and the traveller girds himself again for his journey heavenward,—lonely somewhat, but not without consolation, because of the cheering notes which fall from the fringe of the great Intercessor's robe.

It was the sounding of these bells, telling of immortality and unfading joys, which led one to say, as he gazed on the cold, marble-like face of his dearest earthly friend, "Though the turning of a straw would recall him to life on earth, I would not turn that straw." Another declared that the delight which he experienced, as he listened to these bells on the morning after a dear son had breathed his last, was so great, that if he had had children to lose, he would willingly have parted with one every week to obtain such heavenly comfort. And assuredly if faith's ear were unstopped, and on the alert to catch the notes,

how often would the bereaved Christian be like the Highland mother, who, singing the high praises of God, helped to carry the body of her drowned boy into her now childless home!

Conclusion.—Every bell has, as we have seen, its appropriate fruit, and there are bells to meet every need and every sorrow of life, and to make them productive of results glorifying to the Lord and good to man.

Here is one over-burdened with anxieties, arising from the pressure of family responsibilities and fears as to his own or his children's future. He catches the notes of one clear-ringing bell, which says, "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you;" and the peace of God, passing all understanding, enters in and keeps his heart and mind.

Another is bowed down under a succession of disasters, and is crying, almost in despair, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" He hears a low sweet melody from the bells: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Like oil on heaving billows fall these words on his agitated spirit, and lo, there is a great calm.

A third is peevish and irritable, ready to take re-

venge, or apt to say harsh things, that rankle long in the minds of others. A bell, thrilling because of its unearthly tenderness, is heard, saying, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." And the meekness and gentleness of Christ steals into the heart, and there is a Sabbath in the soul and soft words on the tongue.

Selfishness tempts another. He shuts up his bowels of compassion. He grasps all he can for himself, and is unhappy in the indulgence of his greed. He is told of the unspeakable gift, and embraces his Redeemer; and as he lays hold of the "rich Almighty Friend," he hears a bell on His garment, which declares, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The churl becomes liberal, and enters in a measure into the very joy of his Maker, the bountiful giver of every good and perfect gift.

At times the believer in Jesus grows slack in the heavenward race, and feels the power of temptation to slumber or to wander. What shall rouse and nerve him that he may hasten on to the goal and win the crown? Let him but hear the bell which reminds us that "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness;" and the love of his dear Redeemer quickens the pulses of his affections, and casting off every weight, he arises and follows Christ. Or let him, as his strength is flagging, hear that other divinely

musical and quickening utterance, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," and his feet become "swift as the hinds," and bound onwards in the difficult upward way.

Providence with some may seem to be adverse: friends may be rapidly disappearing; disease may be weakening the frame, and the world be really receding fast; but if they with the ear of faith hearken to the bell which speaks of "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," they will have reason to triumph in the darkest hour. Whatever, indeed, may befall the humble believer, he has this one all-comforting bell, this effective charm to dispel gloom and drive off heart-trouble. Possessing Jesus, he has every spiritual blessing; and by His almighty power, Jesus will make "all things work together for his good."

Sad, beyond all words to describe, is the state of the man who has not received the Saviour's love into his heart of hearts. Whatever else may have been attained, he is in jeopardy every hour. To die without a living union to Christ is to perish eternally. But the Redeemer is knocking still at the door. He is beseeching sinners to accept Him as their salvation. When there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over their yielding to Christ, there will follow joy in their own souls,—a joy that will increase for ever. They will understand the sweetness of that bell on their trusted High Priest's robe, which tolls out the

gladdening notes: "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

In the case of all who have really closed with the Saviour's gracious offer, the pomegranates in good time grow—the fruits of the Spirit assuredly appear. They spring, they flourish however, only as the bells are heard,—as the love, and grace, and precious promises of the Lord are realized. Often ought the believer to listen to the sweet melodies, and satiate his soul with the music of these golden bells. Love, joy, and peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness will then grow apace upon him; and his Father in Jesus will be glorified, because he bears much fruit.

THE END.

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